The Works of Edgar Allan Poe — Volume 2

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THE WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN

POE

VOLUME II

The Raven Edition

[Redactor's Note—Some endnotes are by Poe and some

were added by Griswold. In this volume the notes are at the end.]

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THE PURLOINED LETTER

Nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio.

Seneca.

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18-, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with

my friend C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book-closet, au troisiême, No. 33, Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain. For one hour at least we

had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke

that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was

mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation

between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it,

therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the

entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for

several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G.'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend,

about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

“If it is any point requiring reflection,” observed Dupin, as he forebore to enkindle the wick, “we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark.”

“That is another of your odd notions,” said the Prefect, who had a fashion of

calling every thing “odd” that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of “oddities.”

“Very true,” said Dupin, as he supplied his visiter with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

“And what is the difficulty now?” I asked. “Nothing more in the assassination

way, I hope?”

“Oh no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is very simple indeed,

and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I

thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively

odd.”

“Simple and odd,” said Dupin.

“Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good

deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether.”

“Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault,” said my

friend.

“What nonsense you do talk!” replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

“Perhaps the mystery is a little too plain,” said Dupin.

“Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?”

“A little too self-evident.”

“Ha! ha! ha—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!” roared our visiter, profoundly

amused, “oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!”

“And what, after all, is the matter on hand?” I asked.

“Why, I will tell you,” replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. “I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the

greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold, were it known that I confided it to any one.”

“Proceed,” said I.

“Or not,” said Dupin.

“Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance, has been purloined from the royal

apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession.”

“How is this known?” asked Dupin.

“It is clearly inferred,” replied the Prefect, “from the nature of the document,

and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from

its passing out of the robber’s possession; that is to say, from his employing it as

he must design in the end to employ it.”

“Be a little more explicit,” I said.

“Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain

power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable.”

The

Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

“Still I do not quite understand,” said Dupin.

“No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be

nameless, would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized.”

“But this ascendancy,” I interposed, “would depend upon the robber’s

knowledge of the loser’s knowledge of the robber. Who would dare—”

“The thief,” said G., “is the Minister D—, who dares all things, those

unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not

less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had

been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal boudoir. During

its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it

was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus

unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D—.

His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognises the handwriting of the

address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner,

he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends

to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses, for some fifteen minutes, upon the public affairs. At length, in taking

leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of

the third personage who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped; leaving his

own letter—one of no importance—upon the table."

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to

make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's

knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months

past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven

to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more

sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion

may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the

minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the

letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G.; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to

make thorough search of the minister's hotel; and here my chief embarrassment

lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to

suspect our design."

"But," said I, "you are quite au fait in these investigations. The Parisian police

have done this thing often before."

"O yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the minister gave

me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's

apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys,

as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three

months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been

engaged, personally, in ransacking the D— Hotel. My honor is interested, and, to

mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search

until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself.

I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it

is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of

affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its

susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

"That is to say, of being destroyed," said Dupin.

"True," I observed; "the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the Prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and

his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin. "D—, I presume,

is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course."

"Not altogether a fool," said G., "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only

one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum,

"although I have been guilty of certain doggrel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

“Why the fact is, we took our time, and we searched every where. I have had

long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of

each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that,

to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a secret drawer is impossible.

Any man is a dolt who permits a ‘secret’ drawer to escape him in a search of this

kind. The thing is so plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be

accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of

a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions

we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables

we removed the tops.”

“Why so?”

“Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is

removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated,

the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way.”

“But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?” I asked.

“By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton

be placed around it. Besides, in our case, we were obliged to proceed

without noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces all

articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not

differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it

might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces

all the chairs?"

"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we

should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the glueing—

any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and

you probed the beds and the bed-clothes, as well as the curtains and carpets."

"That of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the

furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed;

then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises,

including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as

before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of

trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious!"

"You include the grounds about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little

trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D—'s papers, of course, and into the books of the

library?"

"Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every

book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We

also measured the thickness of every book-cover, with the most accurate

admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope.

Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly

impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally,

with the needles."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the

microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is not upon the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough re-search of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G—. "I am not more sure that I breathe

than I am that the letter is not at the Hotel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh yes!"—And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book proceeded

to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before. In about a month afterwards he paid us

another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a

chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said,—

"Well, but G—, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made

up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the Minister?"

"Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as

Dupin

suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be."

"How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin.

"Why, a very great deal—a very liberal reward—I don't like to say how much,

precisely; but one thing I will say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The

fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward

has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I

have done."

"Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, "I

really—think, G—, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter.

You might—do a little more, I think, eh?"

"How?—in what way?'

"Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter,

eh?—puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?"

"No; hang Abernethy!"

"To be sure! hang him and welcome. But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of spunging upon this Abernethy for a medical

opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

“‘We will suppose,’ said the miser, ‘that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would you have directed him to take?’

“‘Take!’ said Abernethy, ‘why, take advice, to be sure.’”

“But,” said the Prefect, a little discomposed, “I am perfectly willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would really give fifty thousand francs to any one who

would aid me in the matter.”

“In that case,” replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a check-book,

“you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have

signed it, I will hand you the letter.”

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunder-stricken. For some

minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my

friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then,

apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after

several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it

carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book; then, unlocking an escritoire, took

thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect

agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents,

and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length

unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having

uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

“The Parisian police,” he said, “are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which

their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G— detailed to us his mode of

searching the premises at the Hotel D—, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended.”

“So far as his labors extended?” said I.

“Yes,” said Dupin. “The measures adopted were not only the best of their

kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within

the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it.”

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

“The measures, then,” he continued, “were good in their kind, and well

executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man.

A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs

by being too deep or too shallow, for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy

is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success

at guessing in the game of ‘even and odd’ attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of

another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy

to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the

astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks, ‘are they even or odd?’ Our schoolboy replies, ‘odd,’ and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, ‘the simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd;’—he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a

degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: ‘This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and, in the second, he will propose to himself,

upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even;’—he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning

in the schoolboy, whom his fellows termed ‘lucky,’—what, in its last analysis, is

it?”

“It is merely,” I said, “an identification of the reasoner’s intellect with that of

his opponent.”

“It is,” said Dupin; “and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected

the thorough identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as

follows: ‘When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how

wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance

with the

expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my

mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of

the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucault, to La Bougive, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella."

"And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the

opponent's intellect is admeasured."

"For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin; "and the Prefect

and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the

intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their own ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which they would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of the mass; but when the cunning of

the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them,

of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations; at

best, when urged by some unusual emergency—by some extraordinary reward—

they extend or exaggerate their old modes of practice, without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D—, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—

what is it all but an exaggeration of the application of

the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set

of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of

his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that all

men proceed to conceal a letter,—not exactly in a gimlet hole bored in a chair-

leg—but, at least, in some out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same

tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg? And do you not see also, that such recherchés nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only

by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this recherché manner,—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination

of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude,—the qualities

in question have never been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden any where within

the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its

concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect —its

discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This

functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool,

because he has

acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets; this the Prefect feels; and he is merely guilty of a non distributio medii in thence inferring that all poets are fools."

"But is this really the poet?" I asked. "There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister I believe has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet."

"You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet and mathematician,

he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all,

and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect."

"You surprise me," I said, "by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as the reason

par excellence."

"'Il y a à parièr,'" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "'que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.' The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to

promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an

error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The

French are the originators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis'

conveys 'algebra' about as much as, in Latin, 'ambitus' implies 'ambition,'

'religio' 'religion,' or 'homines honesti,' a set of honorablemen."

“You have a quarrel on hand, I see,” said I, “with some of the algebraists of

Paris; but proceed.”

“I dispute the availability, and thus the value, of that reason which is

cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to

observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even

the truths of what is called pure algebra, are abstract or general truths. And this

error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has

been received. Mathematical axioms are not axioms of general truth. What is true of relation—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to

morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually untrue that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails. In the

consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not,

necessarily, a value when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of relation. But the mathematician argues, from his finite truths, through habit, as if

they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines

them to be. Bryant, in his very learned ‘Mythology,’ mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that ‘although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing

realities.’ With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves,

the ‘Pagan

fables’ are believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of

memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet

encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or

one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that $x2 + px$ was absolutely and unconditionally equal to q. Say to one of these gentlemen, by way

of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where $x2 + px$

is not altogether equal to q, and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavor to knock you down.

“I mean to say,” continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last

observations, “that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I know him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted

to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded.

I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold intriguant. Such a man, I considered,

could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not

have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to

anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I

reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I

regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G—, in fact,

did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt,

also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily

pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise

all the ordinary nooks of concealment. He could not, I reflected, be so weak as

not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open

as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the

microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to simplicity, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You

will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested,

upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so very self-evident."

"Yes," said I, "I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have

fallen into convulsions."

"The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with very strict analogies to

the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the vis inertiæ, for example,

seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one,

and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate with this difficulty, than it

is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are

yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again: have you ever noticed which of the street

signs, over the shop-doors, are the most attractive of attention?"

"I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

"There is a game of puzzles," he resumed, "which is played upon a map. One

party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words

as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like

the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the

understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that

the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole

world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

“But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating

ingenuity of D—; upon the fact that the document must always have been at hand, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence,

obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that

dignitary’s ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of

not attempting to conceal it at all.

“Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the Ministerial hotel. I found D—

at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the

last extremity of ennui. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

“To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the

necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the

conversation of my host.

“I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon

which lay confusedly, some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or

two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very

deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

“At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery fillagree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a

dirty blue ribbon, from

a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantel-piece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two,

across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D— cipher very conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive

female hand, to D—, the minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as

it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

“No sooner had I glanced at this letter, than I concluded it to be that of which I

was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the

one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was

large and black, with the D— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal

arms of the S— family. Here, the address, to the Minister, diminutive and feminine; there the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the

radicalness of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the true methodical habits of D

—, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyper-obtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visiter, and thus exactly in

accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one

who came with the intention to suspect.

“I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion with the Minister upon a topic which I knew well had never

failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter.

In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and

arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery which set at

rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of

the paper, I observed them to be more chafed than seemed necessary. They

presented the broken appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having

been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in

the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed. I bade the Minister good morning, and took

my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

“The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly,

the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel,

and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a terrified

mob. D— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime,

I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by

a fac-simile, (so far as regards externals,) which I had carefully prepared at my

lodgings—imitating the D— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of

bread.

“The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a

man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in

my own pay.”

“But what purpose had you,” I asked, “in replacing the letter by a fac-simile?

Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly, and departed?”

“D—,” replied Dupin, “is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too,

is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good

people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act

as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her

in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he

inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about

the facilis descensus Averni; but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I

have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that

monstrum horrendum, an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I

should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being

defied by her whom the Prefect terms ‘a certain personage’ he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack.”

“How? did you put any thing particular in it?”

“Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would

have been insulting. D—, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him,

quite good-humoredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I

thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I

just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

“‘— — Un dessein si funeste, S’il n’est digne d’Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.

They are to be found in Crebillon’s ‘Atrée.’”

THE THOUSAND-AND-SECOND TALE OF

SCHEHERAZADE

Truth is stranger than fiction.

OLD SAYING.

HAVING had occasion, lately, in the course of some Oriental investigations, to consult the Tellmenow Isitsoornot, a work which (like the Zohar of Simeon Jochaides) is scarcely known at all, even in Europe; and which has never been quoted, to my knowledge, by any American—if we except, perhaps, the author

of the “Curiosities of American Literature”;—having had occasion, I say, to turn

over some pages of the first-mentioned very remarkable work, I was not a little

astonished to discover that the literary world has hitherto been strangely in error

respecting the fate of the vizier’s daughter, Scheherazade, as that fate is depicted

in the “Arabian Nights”; and that the denouement there given, if not altogether

inaccurate, as far as it goes, is at least to blame in not having gone very much farther.

For full information on this interesting topic, I must refer the inquisitive reader to the “Isitsoornot” itself, but in the meantime, I shall be pardoned for giving a summary of what I there discovered.

It will be remembered, that, in the usual version of the tales, a certain monarch

having good cause to be jealous of his queen, not only puts her to death, but makes a vow, by his beard and the prophet, to espouse each night the most beautiful maiden in his dominions, and the next morning to deliver her up to the

executioner.

Having fulfilled this vow for many years to the letter, and with a religious punctuality and method that conferred great credit upon him as a man of devout

feeling and excellent sense, he was interrupted one afternoon (no doubt at his prayers) by a visit from his grand vizier, to whose

daughter, it appears, there had

occurred an idea.

Her name was Scheherazade, and her idea was, that she would either redeem

the land from the depopulating tax upon its beauty, or perish, after the approved

fashion of all heroines, in the attempt.

Accordingly, and although we do not find it to be leap-year (which makes the

sacrifice more meritorious), she deputes her father, the grand vizier, to make an

offer to the king of her hand. This hand the king eagerly accepts—(he had intended to take it at all events, and had put off the matter from day to day, only

through fear of the vizier),—but, in accepting it now, he gives all parties very distinctly to understand, that, grand vizier or no grand vizier, he has not the slightest design of giving up one iota of his vow or of his privileges. When, therefore, the fair Scheherazade insisted upon marrying the king, and did

actually marry him despite her father's excellent advice not to do any thing of the kind—when she would and did marry him, I say, will I, nill I, it was with her

beautiful black eyes as thoroughly open as the nature of the case would allow.

It seems, however, that this politic damsel (who had been reading Machiavelli,

beyond doubt), had a very ingenious little plot in her mind. On the night of the

wedding, she contrived, upon I forget what specious pretence, to have her sister

occupy a couch sufficiently near that of the royal pair to admit of easy conversation from bed to bed; and, a little before cock-crowing, she took care to

awaken the good monarch, her husband (who bore her none the worse will

because he intended to wring her neck on the morrow),—she managed to

awaken him, I say, (although on account of a capital conscience and an easy digestion, he slept well) by the profound interest of a story (about a rat and a black cat, I think) which she was narrating (all in an undertone, of course) to her

sister. When the day broke, it so happened that this history was not altogether finished, and that Scheherazade, in the nature of things could not finish it just then, since it was high time for her to get up and be bowstrung—a thing very little more pleasant than hanging, only a trifle more genteel.

The king's curiosity, however, prevailing, I am sorry to say, even over his sound religious principles, induced him for this once to postpone the fulfilment

of his vow until next morning, for the purpose and with the hope of hearing that

night how it fared in the end with the black cat (a black cat, I think it was) and

the rat.

The night having arrived, however, the lady Scheherazade not only put the

finishing stroke to the black cat and the rat (the rat was blue) but before she well

knew what she was about, found herself deep in the intricacies of a narration, having reference (if I am not altogether mistaken) to a pink horse (with green wings) that went, in a violent manner, by clockwork, and was wound up with an

indigo key. With this history the king was even more profoundly interested than

with the other—and, as the day broke before its conclusion (notwithstanding all

the queen's endeavors to get through with it in time for the bowstringing), there

was again no resource but to postpone that ceremony as before, for twenty-four

hours. The next night there happened a similar accident with a similar result; and

then the next—and then again the next; so that, in the end, the good monarch, having been unavoidably deprived of all opportunity to keep his vow during a period of no less than one thousand and one nights, either forgets it altogether by

the expiration of this time, or gets himself absolved of it in the regular way, or

(what is more probable) breaks it outright, as well as the head of his father confessor. At all events, Scheherazade, who, being lineally descended from Eve,

fell heir, perhaps, to the whole seven baskets of talk, which the latter lady, we all know, picked up from under the trees in the garden of Eden—Scheherazade, I say, finally triumphed, and the tariff upon beauty was repealed.

Now, this conclusion (which is that of the story as we have it upon record) is,

no doubt, excessively proper and pleasant—but alas! like a great many pleasant

things, is more pleasant than true, and I am indebted altogether to the

"Isitsoornot" for the means of correcting the error. "Le mieux," says a French proverb, "est l'ennemi du bien," and, in mentioning that Scheherazade had

inherited the seven baskets of talk, I should have added that she put them out at

compound interest until they amounted to seventy-seven.

"My dear sister," said she, on the thousand-and-second night, (I quote the language of the "Isitsoornot" at this point, verbatim) "my dear sister," said she,

“now that all this little difficulty about the bowstring has blown over, and that this odious tax is so happily repealed, I feel that I have been guilty of great indiscretion in withholding from you and the king (who I am sorry to say, snores

—a thing no gentleman would do) the full conclusion of Sinbad the sailor. This

person went through numerous other and more interesting adventures than those

which I related; but the truth is, I felt sleepy on the particular night of their narration, and so was seduced into cutting them short—a grievous piece of

misconduct, for which I only trust that Allah will forgive me. But even yet it is

not too late to remedy my great neglect—and as soon as I have given the king a

pinch or two in order to wake him up so far that he may stop making that horrible noise, I will forthwith entertain you (and him if he pleases) with the sequel of this very remarkable story.”

Hereupon the sister of Scheherazade, as I have it from the “Isitsoornot,”

expressed no very particular intensity of gratification; but the king, having been

sufficiently pinched, at length ceased snoring, and finally said, “hum!” and then

“hoo!” when the queen, understanding these words (which are no doubt Arabic)

to signify that he was all attention, and would do his best not to snore any more

—the queen, I say, having arranged these matters to her satisfaction, re-entered

thus, at once, into the history of Sinbad the sailor:

“‘At length, in my old age,’ [these are the words of Sinbad himself, as retailed

by Scheherazade]—‘at length, in my old age, and after enjoying many years of tranquillity at home, I became once more possessed of a desire of visiting foreign countries; and one day, without acquainting any of my family with my design, I packed up some bundles of such merchandise as was most precious and

least bulky, and, engaged a porter to carry them, went with him down to the sea-

shore, to await the arrival of any chance vessel that might convey me out of the

kingdom into some region which I had not as yet explored.

“‘Having deposited the packages upon the sands, we sat down beneath some

trees, and looked out into the ocean in the hope of perceiving a ship, but during

several hours we saw none whatever. At length I fancied that I could hear a singular buzzing or humming sound; and the porter, after listening awhile,

declared that he also could distinguish it. Presently it grew louder, and then still

louder, so that we could have no doubt that the object which caused it was approaching us. At length, on the edge of the horizon, we discovered a black speck, which rapidly increased in size until we made it out to be a vast monster,

swimming with a great part of its body above the surface of the sea. It came toward us with inconceivable swiftness, throwing up huge waves of foam around

its breast, and illuminating all that part of the sea through which it passed, with a long line of fire that extended far off into the distance.

“‘As the thing drew near we saw it very distinctly. Its length was equal to that

of three of the loftiest trees that grow, and it was as wide as the great hall of audience in your palace, O most sublime and munificent of the Caliphs. Its body,

which was unlike that of ordinary fishes, was as solid as a rock, and of a jetty blackness throughout all that portion of it which floated above the water, with the exception of a narrow blood-red streak that completely begirdled it. The belly, which floated beneath the surface, and of which we could get only a glimpse now and then as the monster rose and fell with the billows, was entirely

covered with metallic scales, of a color like that of the moon in misty weather.

The back was flat and nearly white, and from it there extended upwards of six spines, about half the length of the whole body.

"'The horrible creature had no mouth that we could perceive, but, as if to make up for this deficiency, it was provided with at least four score of eyes, that

protruded from their sockets like those of the green dragon-fly, and were

arranged all around the body in two rows, one above the other, and parallel to the

blood-red streak, which seemed to answer the purpose of an eyebrow. Two or three of these dreadful eyes were much larger than the others, and had the appearance of solid gold.

"'Although this beast approached us, as I have before said, with the greatest

rapidity, it must have been moved altogether by necromancy—for it had neither fins like a fish nor web-feet like a duck, nor wings like the seashell which is blown along in the manner of a vessel; nor yet did it writhe itself forward as do

the eels. Its head and its tail were shaped precisely alike, only, not far from the

latter, were two small holes that served for nostrils, and through which the monster puffed out its thick breath with prodigious violence, and with a

shrieking, disagreeable noise.

"'Our terror at beholding this hideous thing was very great, but it was even surpassed by our astonishment, when upon getting a nearer look,

we perceived

upon the creature's back a vast number of animals about the size and shape of men, and altogether much resembling them, except that they wore no garments

(as men do), being supplied (by nature, no doubt) with an ugly uncomfortable covering, a good deal like cloth, but fitting so tight to the skin, as to render the

poor wretches laughably awkward, and put them apparently to severe pain. On

the very tips of their heads were certain square-looking boxes, which, at first sight, I thought might have been intended to answer as turbans, but I soon discovered that they were excessively heavy and solid, and I therefore concluded

they were contrivances designed, by their great weight, to keep the heads of the

animals steady and safe upon their shoulders. Around the necks of the creatures

were fastened black collars, (badges of servitude, no doubt,) such as we keep on

our dogs, only much wider and infinitely stiffer, so that it was quite impossible

for these poor victims to move their heads in any direction without moving the

body at the same time; and thus they were doomed to perpetual contemplation of

their noses—a view puggish and snubby in a wonderful, if not positively in an

awful degree.

"'When the monster had nearly reached the shore where we stood, it suddenly

pushed out one of its eyes to a great extent, and emitted from it a terrible flash of fire, accompanied by a dense cloud of smoke, and a noise that I can compare to

nothing but thunder. As the smoke cleared away, we saw one of the odd man-animals standing near the head of the large beast with a trumpet in his hand, through which (putting it to his mouth) he presently addressed us in loud, harsh,

and disagreeable accents, that, perhaps, we should have mistaken for language,

had they not come altogether through the nose.

"'Being thus evidently spoken to, I was at a loss how to reply, as I could in no

manner understand what was said; and in this difficulty I turned to the porter, who was near swooning through affright, and demanded of him his opinion as to

what species of monster it was, what it wanted, and what kind of creatures those

were that so swarmed upon its back. To this the porter replied, as well as he

could for trepidation, that he had once before heard of this sea-beast; that it was a cruel demon, with bowels of sulphur and blood of fire, created by evil genii as

the means of inflicting misery upon mankind; that the things upon its back were

vermin, such as sometimes infest cats and dogs, only a little larger and more savage; and that these vermin had their uses, however evil—for, through the torture they caused the beast by their nibbling and stingings, it was goaded into

that degree of wrath which was requisite to make it roar and commit ill, and so

fulfil the vengeful and malicious designs of the wicked genii.

"This account determined me to take to my heels, and, without once even

looking behind me, I ran at full speed up into the hills, while the porter ran equally fast, although nearly in an opposite direction, so that, by these means, he

finally made his escape with my bundles, of which I have no doubt he took excellent care—although this is a point I cannot determine, as I do not remember

that I ever beheld him again.

"'For myself, I was so hotly pursued by a swarm of the men-vermin (who had

come to the shore in boats) that I was very soon overtaken, bound hand and foot,

and conveyed to the beast, which immediately swam out again into the middle of

the sea.

"'I now bitterly repented my folly in quitting a comfortable home to peril my

life in such adventures as this; but regret being useless, I made the best of my condition, and exerted myself to secure the goodwill of the man-animal that owned the trumpet, and who appeared to exercise authority over his fellows. I succeeded so well in this endeavor that, in a few days, the creature bestowed upon me various tokens of his favor, and in the end even went to the trouble of

teaching me the rudiments of what it was vain enough to denominate its

language; so that, at length, I was enabled to converse with it readily, and came

to make it comprehend the ardent desire I had of seeing the world.

"'Washish squashish squeak, Sinbad, hey-diddle diddle, grunt unt grumble,

hiss, fiss, whiss,' said he to me, one day after dinner—but I beg a thousand pardons, I had forgotten that your majesty is not conversant with the dialect of the Cock-neighs (so the man-animals were called; I presume because their

language formed the connecting link between that of the horse and that of the rooster). With your permission, I will translate. 'Washish squashish,' and so forth:—that is to say, 'I am happy to find, my dear

Sinbad, that you are really a

very excellent fellow; we are now about doing a thing which is called

circumnavigating the globe; and since you are so desirous of seeing the world, I

will strain a point and give you a free passage upon back of the beast.'"

When the Lady Scheherazade had proceeded thus far, relates the "Isitsoornot,"

the king turned over from his left side to his right, and said:

"It is, in fact, very surprising, my dear queen, that you omitted, hitherto, these

latter adventures of Sinbad. Do you know I think them exceedingly entertaining

and strange?"

The king having thus expressed himself, we are told, the fair Scheherazade resumed her history in the following words:

"Sinbad went on in this manner with his narrative to the caliph—'I thanked the man-animal for its kindness, and soon found myself very much at home on

the beast, which swam at a prodigious rate through the ocean; although the surface of the latter is, in that part of the world, by no means flat, but round like a pomegranate, so that we went—so to say —either up hill or down hill all the time.'

"That I think, was very singular," interrupted the king.

"Nevertheless, it is quite true," replied Scheherazade.

"I have my doubts," rejoined the king; "but, pray, be so good as to go on with

the story."

"I will," said the queen. "'The beast,' continued Sinbad to the caliph, 'swam,

as I have related, up hill and down hill until, at length, we arrived at an island,

many hundreds of miles in circumference, but which, nevertheless, had been

built in the middle of the sea by a colony of little things like caterpillars'" (*1)

"Hum!" said the king.

"'Leaving this island,' said Sinbad—(for Scheherazade, it must be understood,

took no notice of her husband's ill-mannered ejaculation) 'leaving this island, we

came to another where the forests were of solid stone, and so hard that they shivered to pieces the finest-tempered axes with which we endeavoured to cut them down.'" (*2)

"Hum!" said the king, again; but Scheherazade, paying him no attention,

continued in the language of Sinbad.

"'Passing beyond this last island, we reached a country where there was a cave that ran to the distance of thirty or forty miles within the bowels of the earth, and that contained a greater number of far more spacious and more

magnificent palaces than are to be found in all Damascus and Bagdad. From the

roofs of these palaces there hung myriads of gems, like diamonds, but larger than

men; and in among the streets of towers and pyramids and temples, there flowed

immense rivers as black as ebony, and swarming with fish that had no eyes.'"

(*3)

"Hum!" said the king. "'We then swam into a region of the sea where we found a lofty mountain, down whose sides there streamed torrents

of melted metal, some of which were twelve miles wide and sixty miles long (*4); while

from an abyss on the summit, issued so vast a quantity of ashes that the sun was

entirely blotted out from the heavens, and it became darker than the darkest midnight; so that when we were even at the distance of a hundred and fifty miles

from the mountain, it was impossible to see the whitest object, however close we

held it to our eyes.'" (*5)

"Hum!" said the king.

"'After quitting this coast, the beast continued his voyage until we met with a

land in which the nature of things seemed reversed—for we here saw a great lake, at the bottom of which, more than a hundred feet beneath the surface of the

water, there flourished in full leaf a forest of tall and luxuriant trees.'" (*6)

"Hoo!" said the king.

"Some hundred miles farther on brought us to a climate where the atmosphere

was so dense as to sustain iron or steel, just as our own does feather.'" (*7)

"Fiddle de dee," said the king.

"Proceeding still in the same direction, we presently arrived at the most

magnificent region in the whole world. Through it there meandered a glorious river for several thousands of miles. This river was of unspeakable depth, and of

a transparency richer than that of amber. It was from three to six miles in width;

and its banks which arose on either side to twelve hundred feet in perpendicular

height, were crowned with ever-blossoming trees and perpetual sweet-scented

flowers, that made the whole territory one gorgeous garden; but the name of this

luxuriant land was the Kingdom of Horror, and to enter it was inevitable death'"

(*8)

"Humph!" said the king.

"'We left this kingdom in great haste, and, after some days, came to another,

where we were astonished to perceive myriads of monstrous animals with horns

resembling scythes upon their heads. These hideous beasts dig for themselves vast caverns in the soil, of a funnel shape, and line the sides of them with rocks,

so disposed one upon the other that they fall instantly, when trodden upon by other animals, thus precipitating them into the monster's dens, where their blood

is immediately sucked, and their carcasses afterwards hurled contemptuously out

to an immense distance from "the caverns of death."'" (*9)

"Pooh!" said the king.

"'Continuing our progress, we perceived a district with vegetables that grew not upon any soil but in the air. (*10) There were others that sprang from the substance of other vegetables; (*11) others that derived their substance from the

bodies of living animals; (*12) and then again, there were others that glowed all

over with intense fire; (*13) others that moved from place to place at pleasure,

(*14) and what was still more wonderful, we discovered flowers that lived and

breathed and moved their limbs at will and had, moreover, the detestable passion

of mankind for enslaving other creatures, and confining them in horrid and solitary prisons until the fulfillment of appointed tasks.’” (*15)

“Pshaw!” said the king.

“‘Quitting this land, we soon arrived at another in which the bees and the birds are mathematicians of such genius and erudition, that they give daily instructions in the science of geometry to the wise men of the empire. The king

of the place having offered a reward for the solution of two very difficult problems, they were solved upon the spot—the one by the bees, and the other by

the birds; but the king keeping their solution a secret, it was only after the most

profound researches and labor, and the writing of an infinity of big books, during

a long series of years, that the men-mathematicians at length arrived at the identical solutions which had been given upon the spot by the bees and by the birds.’” (*16)

“Oh my!” said the king.

“‘We had scarcely lost sight of this empire when we found ourselves close upon another, from whose shores there flew over our heads a flock of fowls a mile in breadth, and two hundred and forty miles long; so that, although they flew a mile during every minute, it required no less than four hours for the whole

flock to pass over us—in which there were several millions of millions of fowl.’” (*17)

“Oh fy!” said the king.

“‘No sooner had we got rid of these birds, which occasioned us great

annoyance, than we were terrified by the appearance of a fowl of

another kind,

and infinitely larger than even the rocs which I met in my former voyages; for it

was bigger than the biggest of the domes on your seraglio, oh, most Munificent

of Caliphs. This terrible fowl had no head that we could perceive, but was fashioned entirely of belly, which was of a prodigious fatness and roundness, of

a soft-looking substance, smooth, shining and striped with various colors. In its

talons, the monster was bearing away to his eyrie in the heavens, a house from

which it had knocked off the roof, and in the interior of which we distinctly saw

human beings, who, beyond doubt, were in a state of frightful despair at the horrible fate which awaited them. We shouted with all our might, in the hope of

frightening the bird into letting go of its prey, but it merely gave a snort or puff, as if of rage and then let fall upon our heads a heavy sack which proved to be filled with sand!'"

"Stuff!" said the king.

"'It was just after this adventure that we encountered a continent of immense

extent and prodigious solidity, but which, nevertheless, was supported entirely upon the back of a sky-blue cow that had no fewer than four hundred horns.'"

(*18)

"That, now, I believe," said the king, "because I have read something of the kind before, in a book."

"'We passed immediately beneath this continent, (swimming in between the

legs of the cow), and, after some hours, found ourselves in a

wonderful country

indeed, which, I was informed by the man-animal, was his own native land, inhabited by things of his own species. This elevated the man-animal very much

in my esteem, and in fact, I now began to feel ashamed of the contemptuous familiarity with which I had treated him; for I found that the man-animals in general were a nation of the most powerful magicians, who lived with worms in

their brain, (*19) which, no doubt, served to stimulate them by their painful writhings and wrigglings to the most miraculous efforts of imagination!'"

"Nonsense!" said the king.

"'Among the magicians, were domesticated several animals of very singular

kinds; for example, there was a huge horse whose bones were iron and whose blood was boiling water. In place of corn, he had black stones for his usual food;

and yet, in spite of so hard a diet, he was so strong and swift that he would drag

a load more weighty than the grandest temple in this city, at a rate surpassing that of the flight of most birds.'" (*20)

"Twattle!" said the king.

"'I saw, also, among these people a hen without feathers, but bigger than a camel; instead of flesh and bone she had iron and brick; her blood, like that of

the horse, (to whom, in fact, she was nearly related,) was boiling water; and like

him she ate nothing but wood or black stones. This hen brought forth very frequently, a hundred chickens in the day; and, after birth, they took up their residence for several weeks within the stomach of their mother.'" (*21)

"Fa! lal!" said the king.

"'One of this nation of mighty conjurors created a man out of brass

and wood, and leather, and endowed him with such ingenuity that he would have beaten at

chess, all the race of mankind with the exception of the great Caliph, Haroun Alraschid. (*22) Another of these magi constructed (of like material) a creature

that put to shame even the genius of him who made it; for so great were its reasoning powers that, in a second, it performed calculations of so vast an extent

that they would have required the united labor of fifty thousand fleshy men for a

year. (*23) But a still more wonderful conjuror fashioned for himself a mighty thing that was neither man nor beast, but which had brains of lead, intermixed with a black matter like pitch, and fingers that it employed with such incredible

speed and dexterity that it would have had no trouble in writing out twenty thousand copies of the Koran in an hour, and this with so exquisite a precision,

that in all the copies there should not be found one to vary from another by the

breadth of the finest hair. This thing was of prodigious strength, so that it erected or overthrew the mightiest empires at a breath; but its powers were exercised equally for evil and for good.'"

"Ridiculous!" said the king.

"'Among this nation of necromancers there was also one who had in his veins

the blood of the salamanders; for he made no scruple of sitting down to smoke

his chibouc in a red-hot oven until his dinner was thoroughly roasted upon its floor. (*24) Another had the faculty of converting the common metals into gold,

without even looking at them during the process. (*25) Another had such a delicacy of touch that he made a wire so fine as to be invisible. (*26) Another had such quickness of perception that he counted all the separate motions of an

elastic body, while it was springing backward and forward at the rate of nine hundred millions of times in a second.'" (*27)

"Absurd!" said the king.

"'Another of these magicians, by means of a fluid that nobody ever yet saw,

could make the corpses of his friends brandish their arms, kick out their legs, fight, or even get up and dance at his will. (*28) Another had cultivated his voice

to so great an extent that he could have made himself heard from one end of the

world to the other. (*29) Another had so long an arm that he could sit down in

Damascus and indite a letter at Bagdad—or indeed at any distance whatsoever.

(*30) Another commanded the lightning to come down to him out of the

heavens, and it came at his call; and served him for a plaything when it came.

Another took two loud sounds and out of them made a silence. Another

constructed a deep darkness out of two brilliant lights. (*31) Another made ice in

a red-hot furnace. (*32) Another directed the sun to paint his portrait, and the

sun did. (*33) Another took this luminary with the moon and the planets, and having first weighed them with scrupulous accuracy, probed into their depths and found out the solidity of the substance of which they were made. But the whole nation is, indeed, of so surprising a necromantic ability, that not even their

infants, nor their commonest cats and dogs have any difficulty in seeing objects

that do not exist at all, or that for twenty millions of years before the birth of the nation itself had been blotted out from the face of

creation.”’ (*34)

“Preposterous!” said the king.

“‘The wives and daughters of these incomparably great and wise magi,’”

continued Scheherazade, without being in any manner disturbed by these

frequent and most ungentlemanly interruptions on the part of her husband—“‘the

wives and daughters of these eminent conjurers are every thing that is

accomplished and refined; and would be every thing that is interesting and beautiful, but for an unhappy fatality that besets them, and from which not even

the miraculous powers of their husbands and fathers has, hitherto, been adequate

to save. Some fatalities come in certain shapes, and some in others—but this of

which I speak has come in the shape of a crotchet.’”

“A what?” said the king.

“‘A crotchet’” said Scheherazade. “‘One of the evil genii, who are perpetually

upon the watch to inflict ill, has put it into the heads of these accomplished ladies that the thing which we describe as personal beauty consists altogether in

the protuberance of the region which lies not very far below the small of the back. Perfection of loveliness, they say, is in the direct ratio of the extent of this lump. Having been long possessed of this idea, and bolsters being cheap in that

country, the days have long gone by since it was possible to distinguish a woman

from a dromedary-’”

“Stop!” said the king—“I can’t stand that, and I won’t. You have

already

given me a dreadful headache with your lies. The day, too, I perceive, is beginning to break. How long have we been married?—my conscience is getting

to be troublesome again. And then that dromedary touch—do you take me for a

fool? Upon the whole, you might as well get up and be throttled."

These words, as I learn from the "Isitsoornot," both grieved and astonished Scheherazade; but, as she knew the king to be a man of scrupulous integrity, and

quite unlikely to forfeit his word, she submitted to her fate with a good grace.

She derived, however, great consolation, (during the tightening of the

bowstring,) from the reflection that much of the history remained still untold, and that the petulance of her brute of a husband had reaped for him a most

righteous reward, in depriving him of many inconceivable adventures.

A DESCENT INTO THE MAELSTRÖM.

The ways of God in Nature, as in Providence, are not as our

ways; nor are the models that we frame any way commensurate to the

vastness, profundity, and unsearchableness of His works, which have

a depth in them greater than the well of Democritus.

Joseph Glanville.

WE had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

"Not long ago," said he at length, "and I could have guided you on this route

as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to

me an event such as never happened to mortal man—or at least such as no man

ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured

have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a *very* old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the

least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look

over this little cliff without getting giddy?"

The "little cliff," upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down

to rest that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept

from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this

"little cliff" arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to within half a dozen yards of its brink. In truth so deeply was I excited by the perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full

length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea

that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up

and look out into the distance.

"You must get over these fancies," said the guide, "for I have brought you here that you might have the best possible view of the scene of that event I mentioned—and to tell you the whole story with the spot just under your eye."

“We are now,” he continued, in that particularizing manner which

distinguished him—“we are now close upon the Norwegian coast—in the sixty-

eighth degree of latitude—in the great province of Nordland—and in the dreary

district of Lofoden. The mountain upon whose top we sit is Helseggen, the Cloudy. Now raise yourself up a little higher—hold on to the grass if you feel giddy—so—and look out, beyond the belt of vapor beneath us, into the sea.”

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so

inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer’s account of

the *Mare Tenebrarum*. A panorama more deplorably desolate no human

imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by

the surf which reared high up against its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were

placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a

small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land, arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and

encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and

the shore, had something very unusual about it. Although, at the time, so strong a

gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-

reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still there was

here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry cross dashing of

water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise. Of foam

there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

“The island in the distance,” resumed the old man, “is called by the

Norwegians Vurrgh. The one midway is Moskoe. That a mile to the northward is

Ambaaren. Yonder are Islesen, Hotholm, Keildhelm, Suarven, and Buckholm.

Farther off—between Moskoe and Vurrgh—are Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen,

and Stockholm. These are the true names of the places—but why it has been thought necessary to name them at all, is more than either you or I can understand. Do you hear anything? Do you see any change in the water?”

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we

had ascended from the interior of Lofoden, so that we had caught no glimpse of

the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived that what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us, was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its

speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea, as far as Vurrgh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between

Moskoe and the

coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed

and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into phrensied

convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable

vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which

water never elsewhere assumes except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration.

The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by

one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none

had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance,

and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the

subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly

—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad

belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some

forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and

sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice,

half shriek,

half roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself

upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.

“This,” said I at length, to the old man—“this *can* be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelström.”

“So it is sometimes termed,” said he. “We Norwegians call it the Moskoe-

ström, from the island of Moskoe in the midway.”

The ordinary accounts of this vortex had by no means prepared me for what I

saw. That of Jonas Ramus, which is perhaps the most circumstantial of any, cannot impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence, or of the horror

of the scene—or of the wild bewildering sense of *the novel* which confounds the beholder. I am not sure from what point of view the writer in question surveyed

it, nor at what time; but it could neither have been from the summit of Helseggen, nor during a storm. There are some passages of his description, nevertheless, which may be quoted for their details, although their effect is exceedingly feeble in conveying an impression of the spectacle.

“Between Lofoden and Moskoe,” he says, “the depth of the water is between thirty-six and forty fathoms; but on the other side, toward Ver (Vurrgh) this depth decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel, without the

risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather. When

it is flood, the stream runs up the country between Lofoden and Moskoe with a

boisterous rapidity; but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarce equalled

by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts; the noise being heard several leagues

off, and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes

within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beat to pieces against the rocks; and when the water relaxes, the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquility are only

at the turn of the ebb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an

hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and

its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norway mile of

it. Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding against it before they were within its reach. It likewise happens frequently, that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence; and then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles

to disengage themselves. A bear once, attempting to swim from Lofoden to

Moskoe, was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so

as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine trees, after being absorbed

by the current, rise again broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and reflux

of the sea—it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year

1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima Sunday, it raged with such noise and

impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground."

In regard to the depth of the water, I could not see how this could have been

ascertained at all in the immediate vicinity of the vortex. The "forty fathoms"

must have reference only to portions of the channel close upon the shore either

of Moskoe or Lofoden. The depth in the centre of the Moskoe-ström must be immeasurably greater; and no better proof of this fact is necessary than can be obtained from even the sidelong glance into the abyss of the whirl which may be

had from the highest crag of Helseggen. Looking down from this pinnacle upon

the howling Phlegethon below, I could not help smiling at the simplicity with which the honest Jonas Ramus records, as a matter difficult of belief, the anecdotes of the whales and the bears; for it appeared to me, in fact, a self-evident thing, that the largest ship of the line in existence, coming within the

influence of that deadly attraction, could resist it as little as a feather the hurricane, and must disappear bodily and at once.

The attempts to account for the phenomenon—some of which, I remember,

seemed to me sufficiently plausible in perusal—now wore a very different and unsatisfactory aspect. The idea generally received is that this, as well as three smaller vortices among the Ferroe islands, "have no other cause than the

collision of waves rising and falling, at flux and reflux, against a ridge of rocks

and shelves, which confines the water so that it precipitates itself like a cataract; and thus the higher the flood rises, the deeper must the fall be, and the natural result of all is a whirlpool or vortex, the prodigious

suction of which is sufficiently known by lesser experiments."—These are the words of the

Encyclopædia Britannica. Kircher and others imagine that in the centre of the channel of the Maelström is an abyss penetrating the globe, and issuing in some

very remote part—the Gulf of Bothnia being somewhat decidedly named in one

instance. This opinion, idle in itself, was the one to which, as I gazed, my imagination most readily assented; and, mentioning it to the guide, I was rather

surprised to hear him say that, although it was the view almost universally entertained of the subject by the Norwegians, it nevertheless was not his own. As

to the former notion he confessed his inability to comprehend it; and here I agreed with him—for, however conclusive on paper, it becomes altogether

unintelligible, and even absurd, amid the thunder of the abyss.

"You have had a good look at the whirl now," said the old man, "and if you

will creep round this crag, so as to get in its lee, and deaden the roar of the water, I will tell you a story that will convince you I ought to know something of the

Moskoe-ström."

I placed myself as desired, and he proceeded.

"Myself and my two brothers once owned a schooner-rigged smack of about

seventy tons burthen, with which we were in the habit of fishing among the islands beyond Moskoe, nearly to Vurrgh. In all violent eddies at sea there is good fishing, at proper opportunities, if one has only the courage to attempt it; but among the whole of the Lofoden coastmen, we three were the only ones who

made a regular business of going out to the islands, as I tell you. The usual grounds are a great way lower down to the southward. There

fish can be got at

all hours, without much risk, and therefore these places are preferred. The choice

spots over here among the rocks, however, not only yield the finest variety, but

in far greater abundance; so that we often got in a single day, what the more timid of the craft could not scrape together in a week. In fact, we made it a matter of desperate speculation—the risk of life standing instead of labor, and

courage answering for capital.

“We kept the smack in a cove about five miles higher up the coast than this;

and it was our practice, in fine weather, to take advantage of the fifteen minutes’

slack to push across the main channel of the Moskoe-ström, far above the pool,

and then drop down upon anchorage somewhere near Otterholm, or Sandflesen,

where the eddies are not so violent as elsewhere. Here we used to remain until

nearly time for slack-water again, when we weighed and made for home. We

never set out upon this expedition without a steady side wind for going and coming—one that we felt sure would not fail us before our return—and we

seldom made a mis-calculation upon this point. Twice, during six years, we were

forced to stay all night at anchor on account of a dead calm, which is a rare thing

indeed just about here; and once we had to remain on the grounds nearly a week,

starving to death, owing to a gale which blew up shortly after our

arrival, and made the channel too boisterous to be thought of. Upon this occasion we should

have been driven out to sea in spite of everything, (for the whirlpools threw us

round and round so violently, that, at length, we fouled our anchor and dragged

it) if it had not been that we drifted into one of the innumerable cross currents—

here to-day and gone to-morrow—which drove us under the lee of Flimen,

where, by good luck, we brought up.

“I could not tell you the twentieth part of the difficulties we encountered ‘on

the grounds’—it is a bad spot to be in, even in good weather—but we made shift

always to run the gauntlet of the Moskoe-ström itself without accident; although

at times my heart has been in my mouth when we happened to be a minute or so

behind or before the slack. The wind sometimes was not as strong as we thought

it at starting, and then we made rather less way than we could wish, while the current rendered the smack unmanageable. My eldest brother had a son eighteen

years old, and I had two stout boys of my own. These would have been of great

assistance at such times, in using the sweeps, as well as afterward in fishing—

but, somehow, although we ran the risk ourselves, we had not the heart to let the

young ones get into the danger—for, after all is said and done, it *was* a horrible danger, and that is the truth.

“It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you

occurred. It was on the tenth day of July, 18-, a day which the people of this part

of the world will never forget—for it was one in which blew the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens. And yet all the morning, and indeed

until late in the afternoon, there was a gentle and steady breeze from the south-

west, while the sun shone brightly, so that the oldest seaman among us could not

have foreseen what was to follow.

“The three of us—my two brothers and myself—had crossed over to the islands about two o’clock P. M., and had soon nearly loaded the smack with fine

fish, which, we all remarked, were more plenty that day than we had ever known

them. It was just seven, *by my watch*, when we weighed and started for home, so as to make the worst of the Ström at slack water, which we knew would be at eight.

“We set out with a fresh wind on our starboard quarter, and for some time spanked along at a great rate, never dreaming of danger, for indeed we saw not

the slightest reason to apprehend it. All at once we were taken aback by a breeze

from over Helseggen. This was most unusual—something that had never

happened to us before—and I began to feel a little uneasy, without exactly knowing why. We put the boat on the wind, but could make no headway at all for the eddies, and I was upon the point of proposing to return to the anchorage,

when, looking astern, we saw the whole horizon covered with a singular copper-

colored cloud that rose with the most amazing velocity.

“In the meantime the breeze that had headed us off fell away, and we were dead becalmed, drifting about in every direction. This state of things, however,

did not last long enough to give us time to think about it. In less than a minute

the storm was upon us—in less than two the sky was entirely overcast —and

what with this and the driving spray, it became suddenly so dark that we could

not see each other in the smack.

“Such a hurricane as then blew it is folly to attempt describing. The oldest seaman in Norway never experienced any thing like it. We had let our sails go by

the run before it cleverly took us; but, at the first puff, both our masts went by

the board as if they had been sawed off—the mainmast taking with it my

youngest brother, who had lashed himself to it for safety.

“Our boat was the lightest feather of a thing that ever sat upon water. It had a

complete flush deck, with only a small hatch near the bow, and this hatch it had

always been our custom to batten down when about to cross the Ström, by way

of precaution against the chopping seas. But for this circumstance we should have foundered at once—for we lay entirely buried for some moments. How my

elder brother escaped destruction I cannot say, for I never had an opportunity of

ascertaining. For my part, as soon as I had let the foresail run, I threw myself flat on deck, with my feet against the narrow gunwale of the

bow, and with my hands grasping a ring-bolt near the foot of the fore-mast. It was mere instinct that prompted me to do this—which was undoubtedly the very best thing I could

have done—for I was too much flurried to think.

“For some moments we were completely deluged, as I say, and all this time I

held my breath, and clung to the bolt. When I could stand it no longer I raised myself upon my knees, still keeping hold with my hands, and thus got my head

clear. Presently our little boat gave herself a shake, just as a dog does in coming

out of the water, and thus rid herself, in some measure, of the seas. I was now trying to get the better of the stupor that had come over me, and to collect my senses so as to see what was to be done, when I felt somebody grasp my arm. It

was my elder brother, and my heart leaped for joy, for I had made sure that he

was overboard—but the next moment all this joy was turned into horror—for he

put his mouth close to my ear, and screamed out the word ‘ *Moskoe-ström!* ’

“No one ever will know what my feelings were at that moment. I shook from

head to foot as if I had had the most violent fit of the ague. I knew what he meant by that one word well enough—I knew what he wished to make me

understand. With the wind that now drove us on, we were bound for the whirl of

the Ström, and nothing could save us!

“You perceive that in crossing the Ström *channel*, we always went a long way

up above the whirl, even in the calmest weather, and then had to wait and watch

carefully for the slack—but now we were driving right upon the pool itself, and

in such a hurricane as this! ‘To be sure,’ I thought, ‘we shall get there just about

the slack—there is some little hope in that’—but in the next moment I cursed myself for being so great a fool as to dream of hope at all. I knew very well that

we were doomed, had we been ten times a ninety-gun ship.

“By this time the first fury of the tempest had spent itself, or perhaps we did

not feel it so much, as we scudded before it, but at all events the seas, which at

first had been kept down by the wind, and lay flat and frothing, now got up into

absolute mountains. A singular change, too, had come over the heavens. Around

in every direction it was still as black as pitch, but nearly overhead there burst out, all at once, a circular rift of clear sky—as clear as I ever saw—and of a deep

bright blue—and through it there blazed forth the full moon with a lustre that I

never before knew her to wear. She lit up every thing about us with the greatest

distinctness—but, oh God, what a scene it was to light up!

“I now made one or two attempts to speak to my brother—but, in some

manner which I could not understand, the din had so increased that I could not

make him hear a single word, although I screamed at the top of my voice in his

ear. Presently he shook his head, looking as pale as death, and held up one of his

fingers, as if to say *'listen! '*

"At first I could not make out what he meant—but soon a hideous thought

flashed upon me. I dragged my watch from its fob. It was not going. I glanced at

its face by the moonlight, and then burst into tears as I flung it far away into the

ocean. *It had run down at seven o'clock! We were behind the time of the slack, and the whirl of the Ström was in full fury!*

"When a boat is well built, properly trimmed, and not deep laden, the waves

in a strong gale, when she is going large, seem always to slip from beneath her—

which appears very strange to a landsman—and this is what is called *riding*, in sea phrase. Well, so far we had ridden the swells very cleverly; but presently a

gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it

rose—up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could

rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge, that

made me feel sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in

a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-Ström whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the

every-day Moskoe-Ström, than the whirl as you now see it is like a mill-race. If I

had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognised the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror.

The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

“It could not have been more than two minutes afterward until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half

turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the

same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind

of shrill shriek—such a sound as you might imagine given out by the waste-pipes of many thousand steam-vessels, letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the whirl; and I thought, of course, that another moment would plunge us into the abyss—down which we

could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we wore borne along. The boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim

like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the

whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a

huge writhing wall between us and the horizon.

“It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I

felt more composed than when we were only approaching it. Having made up

my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a great deal of that terror which unmanned

me at first. I suppose it was despair that strung my nerves.

“It may look like boasting—but what I tell you is truth—I began to reflect how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner, and how foolish it was in

me to think of so paltry a consideration as my own individual life, in view of so

wonderful a manifestation of God's power. I do believe that I blushed with

shame when this idea crossed my mind. After a little while I became possessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a *wish* to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make; and my principal grief was

that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I should see. These, no doubt, were singular fancies to occupy a man's

mind in such extremity—and I have often thought since, that the revolutions of

the boat around the pool might have rendered me a little light-headed.

"There was another circumstance which tended to restore my self-possession;

and this was the cessation of the wind, which could not reach us in our present

situation—for, as you saw yourself, the belt of surf is considerably lower than the general bed of the ocean, and this latter now towered above us, a high, black,

mountainous ridge. If you have never been at sea in a heavy gale, you can form

no idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by the wind and spray together.

They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection. But we were now, in a great measure, rid of these annoyances—just

as death-condemned felons in prison are allowed petty indulgences, forbidden them while their doom is yet uncertain.

"How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered

round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting

gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer

to its horrible inner edge. All this time I had never let go of the ring-bolt. My brother was at the stern, holding on to a small empty water-cask which had been

securely lashed under the coop of the counter, and was the only thing on deck that had not been swept overboard when the gale first took us. As we approached

the brink of the pit he let go his hold upon this, and made for the ring, from which, in the agony of his terror, he endeavored to force my hands, as it was not

large enough to afford us both a secure grasp. I never felt deeper grief than when

I saw him attempt this act—although I knew he was a madman when he did it—

a raving maniac through sheer fright. I did not care, however, to contest the point

with him. I knew it could make no difference whether either of us held on at all;

so I let him have the bolt, and went astern to the cask. This there was no great

difficulty in doing; for the smack flew round steadily enough, and upon an even

keel—only swaying to and fro, with the immense sweeps and swelters of the whirl. Scarcely had I secured myself in my new position, when we gave a wild

lurch to starboard, and rushed headlong into the abyss. I muttered a hurried prayer to God, and thought all was over.

“As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent, I had instinctively tightened my

hold upon the barrel, and closed my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open

them—while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was

not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still

lived. The sense of falling had ceased; and the motion of the vessel seemed much as it had been before, while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she

now lay more along. I took courage, and looked once again upon the scene.

“Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror, and admiration with which

I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in

depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony, but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from

that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a

flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost

recesses of the abyss.

“At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general

burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little,

however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view, from the manner in which the smack hung on the

inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her

deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam-ends. I could not help observing,

nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation, than if we had been upon a dead level; and this, I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we

revolved.

“The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf;

but still I could make out nothing distinctly, on account of a thick mist in which

everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent

rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmen say is the only

pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist, or spray, was no doubt

occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all met together at the bottom—but the yell that went up to the Heavens from out of that

mist, I dare not attempt to describe.

“Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam above, had carried

us a great distance down the slope; but our farther descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept—not with any uniform movement—

but in dizzying swings and jerks, that sent us sometimes only a few hundred yards—sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress

downward, at each revolution, was slow, but very perceptible.

“Looking about me upon the wide waste of liquid ebony on which we were

thus borne, I perceived that our boat was not the only object in the embrace of

the whirl. Both above and below us were visible fragments of vessels,

large masses of building timber and trunks of trees, with many smaller articles, such

as pieces of house furniture, broken boxes, barrels and staves. I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer and nearer to my dreadful

doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our company. I *must* have been delirious—for I even sought *amusement* in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below. 'This fir tree,' I found myself at one time saying, 'will

certainly be the next thing that takes the awful plunge and disappears,'—and then I was disappointed to find that the wreck of a Dutch merchant ship overtook

it and went down before. At length, after making several guesses of this nature,

and being deceived in all—this fact—the fact of my invariable miscalculation—

set me upon a train of reflection that made my limbs again tremble, and my heart

beat heavily once more.

"It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting

hope. This hope arose partly from memory, and partly from present observation.

I called to mind the great variety of buoyant matter that strewed the coast of Lofoden, having been absorbed and then thrown forth by the Moskoe-ström. By

far the greater number of the articles were shattered in the most extraordinary way—so chafed and roughened as to have the appearance of being stuck full of

splinters—but then I distinctly recollected that there were *some* of them which were not disfigured at all. Now I could not account for this difference except by

supposing that the roughened fragments were the only ones which had been

completely absorbed—that the others had entered the whirl at so late a period of the tide, or, for some reason, had descended so slowly after entering, that they did not reach the bottom before the turn of the flood came, or of the ebb, as the

case might be. I conceived it possible, in either instance, that they might thus be

whirled up again to the level of the ocean, without undergoing the fate of those

which had been drawn in more early, or absorbed more rapidly. I made, also, three important observations. The first was, that, as a general rule, the larger the

bodies were, the more rapid their descent—the second, that, between two masses

of equal extent, the one spherical, and the other *of any other shape*, the superiority in speed of descent was with the sphere—the third, that, between two

masses of equal size, the one cylindrical, and the other of any other shape, the

cylinder was absorbed the more slowly. Since my escape, I have had several conversations on this subject with an old school-master of the district; and it was

from him that I learned the use of the words ‘cylinder’ and ‘sphere.’ He explained to me—although I have forgotten the explanation—how what I

observed was, in fact, the natural consequence of the forms of the floating fragments—and showed me how it happened that a cylinder, swimming in a

vortex, offered more resistance to its suction, and was drawn in with greater difficulty than an equally bulky body, of any form whatever. (*1)

“There was one startling circumstance which went a great way in enforcing

these observations, and rendering me anxious to turn them to account, and this was that, at every revolution, we passed something like a barrel, or else the yard

or the mast of a vessel, while many of these things, which had been on our level

when I first opened my eyes upon the wonders of the whirlpool, were now high

up above us, and seemed to have moved but little from their original station.

“I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw

myself with it into the water. I attracted my brother’s attention by signs, pointed

to the floating barrels that came near us, and did everything in my power to make him understand what I was about to do. I thought at length that he comprehended my design—but, whether this was the case or not, he shook his head despairingly, and refused to move from his station by the ring-bolt. It was

impossible to reach him; the emergency admitted of no delay; and so, with a bitter struggle, I resigned him to his fate, fastened myself to the cask by means

of the lashings which secured it to the counter, and precipitated myself with it into the sea, without another moment’s hesitation.

“The result was precisely what I had hoped it might be. As it is myself who

now tell you this tale—as you see that I *did* escape—and as you are already in possession of the mode in which this escape was effected, and must therefore anticipate all that I have farther to say—I will bring my story quickly to conclusion. It might have been an hour, or thereabout, after my quitting the smack, when, having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or

four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and, bearing my loved brother with it, plunged headlong, at once and forever, into the chaos of foam below. The barrel

to which I was attached sunk very little farther than half the distance between the

bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard, before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the

vast funnel became momently less and less steep. The gyrations of the whirl grew, gradually, less and less violent. By degrees, the froth and the rainbow

disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon was setting radiantly in the

west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores

of Lofoden, and above the spot where the pool of the Moskoe-ström *had been*. It was the hour of the slack—but the sea still heaved in mountainous waves from

the effects of the hurricane. I was borne violently into the channel of the Ström,

and in a few minutes was hurried down the coast into the ‘grounds’ of the fishermen. A boat picked me up—exhausted from fatigue—and (now that the

danger was removed) speechless from the memory of its horror. Those who drew

me on board were my old mates and daily companions—but they knew me no

more than they would have known a traveller from the spirit-land. My hair which had been raven-black the day before, was as white as you see it now. They

say too that the whole expression of my countenance had changed. I told them

my story—they did not believe it. I now tell it to *you*—and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden.”

VON KEMPELEN AND HIS DISCOVERY

AFTER THE very minute and elaborate paper by Arago, to say nothing of the

summary in 'Silliman's Journal,' with the detailed statement just published by Lieutenant Maury, it will not be supposed, of course, that in offering a few hurried remarks in reference to Von Kempelen's discovery, I have any design to

look at the subject in a scientific point of view. My object is simply, in the first

place, to say a few words of Von Kempelen himself (with whom, some years ago, I had the honor of a slight personal acquaintance), since every thing which

concerns him must necessarily, at this moment, be of interest; and, in the second

place, to look in a general way, and speculatively, at the results of the discovery.

It may be as well, however, to premise the cursory observations which I have

to offer, by denying, very decidedly, what seems to be a general impression (gleaned, as usual in a case of this kind, from the newspapers), viz.: that this discovery, astounding as it unquestionably is, is unanticipated.

By reference to the 'Diary of Sir Humphrey Davy' (Cottle and Munroe,

London, pp. 150), it will be seen at pp. 53 and 82, that this illustrious chemist had not only conceived the idea now in question, but had actually made no inconsiderable progress, experimentally, in the very identical analysis now so triumphantly brought to an issue by Von Kempelen, who although he makes not

the slightest allusion to it, is, without doubt (I say it unhesitatingly, and can prove it, if required), indebted to the 'Diary' for at least the first hint of his own undertaking.

The paragraph from the 'Courier and Enquirer,' which is now going the

rounds of the press, and which purports to claim the invention for a Mr. Kissam,

of Brunswick, Maine, appears to me, I confess, a little apocryphal, for several reasons; although there is nothing either impossible or very improbable in the statement made. I need not go into details. My opinion of the paragraph is founded principally upon its manner. It does not look true. Persons who are narrating facts, are seldom so particular as Mr. Kissam seems to be, about day and date and precise location. Besides, if Mr. Kissam actually did come upon the

discovery he says he did, at the period designated—nearly eight years ago—how

happens it that he took no steps, on the instant, to reap the immense benefits which the merest bumpkin must have known would have resulted to him

individually, if not to the world at large, from the discovery? It seems to me quite

incredible that any man of common understanding could have discovered what Mr. Kissam says he did, and yet have subsequently acted so like a baby—so like

an owl—as Mr. Kissam admits that he did. By-the-way, who is Mr. Kissam? and

is not the whole paragraph in the 'Courier and Enquirer' a fabrication got up to

'make a talk'? It must be confessed that it has an amazingly moon-hoaxy-air.

Very little dependence is to be placed upon it, in my humble opinion; and if I were not well aware, from experience, how very easily men of science are

mystified, on points out of their usual range of inquiry, I should be profoundly astonished at finding so eminent a chemist as Professor Draper, discussing Mr.

Kissam's (or is it Mr. Quizzem's?) pretensions to the discovery, in so serious a

tone.

But to return to the 'Diary' of Sir Humphrey Davy. This pamphlet was not designed for the public eye, even upon the decease of the writer, as any person at

all conversant with authorship may satisfy himself at once by the slightest inspection of the style. At page 13, for example, near the middle, we read, in reference to his researches about the protoxide of azote: 'In less than half a minute the respiration being continued, diminished gradually and were

succeeded by analogous to gentle pressure on all the muscles.' That the

respiration was not 'diminished,' is not only clear by the subsequent context, but

by the use of the plural, 'were.' The sentence, no doubt, was thus intended: 'In

less than half a minute, the respiration [being continued, these feelings]

diminished gradually, and were succeeded by [a sensation] analogous to gentle pressure on all the muscles.' A hundred similar instances go to show that the MS.

so inconsiderately published, was merely a rough note-book, meant only for the

writer's own eye, but an inspection of the pamphlet will convince almost any thinking person of the truth of my suggestion. The fact is, Sir Humphrey Davy

was about the last man in the world to commit himself on scientific topics. Not

only had he a more than ordinary dislike to quackery, but he was morbidly afraid

of appearing empirical; so that, however fully he might have been convinced that

he was on the right track in the matter now in question, he would never have spoken out, until he had every thing ready for the most practical demonstration. I

verily believe that his last moments would have been rendered wretched, could

he have suspected that his wishes in regard to burning this ‘Diary’ (full of crude

speculations) would have been unattended to; as, it seems, they were. I say ‘his

wishes,’ for that he meant to include this note-book among the miscellaneous papers directed ‘to be burnt,’ I think there can be no manner of doubt. Whether it

escaped the flames by good fortune or by bad, yet remains to be seen. That the

passages quoted above, with the other similar ones referred to, gave Von

Kempelen the hint, I do not in the slightest degree question; but I repeat, it yet remains to be seen whether this momentous discovery itself (momentous under

any circumstances) will be of service or disservice to mankind at large. That Von

Kempelen and his immediate friends will reap a rich harvest, it would be folly to

doubt for a moment. They will scarcely be so weak as not to ‘realize,’ in time, by

large purchases of houses and land, with other property of intrinsic value.

In the brief account of Von Kempelen which appeared in the ‘Home Journal,’

and has since been extensively copied, several misapprehensions of the German

original seem to have been made by the translator, who professes to have taken

the passage from a late number of the Presburg ‘Schnellpost.’ ‘Viele’ has

evidently been misconceived (as it often is), and what the translator renders by

‘sorrows,’ is probably ‘lieden,’ which, in its true version, ‘sufferings,’ would give a totally different complexion to the whole account; but, of course, much of this

is merely guess, on my part.

Von Kempelen, however, is by no means ‘a misanthrope,’ in appearance, at

least, whatever he may be in fact. My acquaintance with him was casual

altogether; and I am scarcely warranted in saying that I know him at all; but to

have seen and conversed with a man of so prodigious a notoriety as he has attained, or will attain in a few days, is not a small matter, as times go.

‘The Literary World’ speaks of him, confidently, as a native of Presburg

(misled, perhaps, by the account in ‘The Home Journal’) but I am pleased in being able to state positively, since I have it from his own lips, that he was born

in Utica, in the State of New York, although both his parents, I believe, are of Presburg descent. The family is connected, in some way, with Maelzel, of

Automaton-chess-player memory. In person, he is short and stout, with large, fat,

blue eyes, sandy hair and whiskers, a wide but pleasing mouth, fine teeth, and I

think a Roman nose. There is some defect in one of his feet. His address is frank,

and his whole manner noticeable for bonhomie. Altogether, he looks, speaks, and acts as little like ‘a misanthrope’ as any man I ever saw. We were fellow-sojourners for a week about six years ago, at Earl’s Hotel, in Providence, Rhode

Island; and I presume that I conversed with him, at various times, for some three

or four hours altogether. His principal topics were those of the day, and nothing

that fell from him led me to suspect his scientific attainments. He left the hotel

before me, intending to go to New York, and thence to Bremen; it was in the latter city that his great discovery was first made public; or, rather, it was there

that he was first suspected of having made it. This is about all that I personally

know of the now immortal Von Kempelen; but I have thought that even these few details would have interest for the public.

There can be little question that most of the marvellous rumors afloat about this affair are pure inventions, entitled to about as much credit as the story of Aladdin's lamp; and yet, in a case of this kind, as in the case of the discoveries in California, it is clear that the truth may be stranger than fiction. The following anecdote, at least, is so well authenticated, that we may receive it implicitly.

Von Kempelen had never been even tolerably well off during his residence at

Bremen; and often, it was well known, he had been put to extreme shifts in order

to raise trifling sums. When the great excitement occurred about the forgery on

the house of Gutsmuth & Co., suspicion was directed toward Von Kempelen, on

account of his having purchased a considerable property in Gasperitch Lane, and

his refusing, when questioned, to explain how he became possessed of the

purchase money. He was at length arrested, but nothing decisive appearing

against him, was in the end set at liberty. The police, however, kept a strict watch

upon his movements, and thus discovered that he left home frequently, taking always the same road, and invariably giving his watchers the slip in the

neighborhood of that labyrinth of narrow and crooked passages known by the flash name of the ‘Dondergat.’ Finally, by dint of great perseverance, they traced

him to a garret in an old house of seven stories, in an alley called Flatzplatz,—

and, coming upon him suddenly, found him, as they imagined, in the midst of his

counterfeiting operations. His agitation is represented as so excessive that the officers had not the slightest doubt of his guilt. After hand-cuffing him, they searched his room, or rather rooms, for it appears he occupied all the mansarde.

Opening into the garret where they caught him, was a closet, ten feet by eight,

fitted up with some chemical apparatus, of which the object has not yet been ascertained. In one corner of the closet was a very small furnace, with a glowing

fire in it, and on the fire a kind of duplicate crucible—two crucibles connected

by a tube. One of these crucibles was nearly full of lead in a state of fusion, but

not reaching up to the aperture of the tube, which was close to the brim. The other crucible had some liquid in it, which, as the officers entered, seemed to be

furiously dissipating in vapor. They relate that, on finding himself taken, Kempelen seized the crucibles with both hands (which were encased in gloves that afterwards turned out to be asbestic), and threw the contents on the tiled floor. It was now that they hand-cuffed him; and before proceeding to ransack the premises they searched his person, but nothing unusual was found about him,

excepting a paper parcel, in his coat-pocket, containing what was afterward ascertained to be a mixture of antimony and some unknown substance, in nearly,

but not quite, equal proportions. All attempts at analyzing the unknown

substance have, so far, failed, but that it will ultimately be analyzed, is not to be

doubted.

Passing out of the closet with their prisoner, the officers went through a sort of

ante-chamber, in which nothing material was found, to the chemist's sleeping-room. They here rummaged some drawers and boxes, but discovered only a few

papers, of no importance, and some good coin, silver and gold. At length, looking under the bed, they saw a large, common hair trunk, without hinges, hasp, or lock, and with the top lying carelessly across the bottom portion. Upon

attempting to draw this trunk out from under the bed, they found that, with their

united strength (there were three of them, all powerful men), they 'could not stir

it one inch.' Much astonished at this, one of them crawled under the bed, and looking into the trunk, said:

'No wonder we couldn't move it—why it's full to the brim of old bits of brass!'

Putting his feet, now, against the wall so as to get a good purchase, and pushing with all his force, while his companions pulled with all theirs, the trunk,

with much difficulty, was slid out from under the bed, and its contents examined.

The supposed brass with which it was filled was all in small, smooth pieces, varying from the size of a pea to that of a dollar; but the pieces were irregular in

shape, although more or less flat-looking, upon the whole, ‘very much as lead looks when thrown upon the ground in a molten state, and there suffered to grow

cool.’ Now, not one of these officers for a moment suspected this metal to be any

thing but brass. The idea of its being gold never entered their brains, of course;

how could such a wild fancy have entered it? And their astonishment may be well conceived, when the next day it became known, all over Bremen, that the

‘lot of brass’ which they had carted so contemptuously to the police office, without putting themselves to the trouble of pocketing the smallest scrap, was not only gold—real gold—but gold far finer than any employed in coinage-gold,

in fact, absolutely pure, virgin, without the slightest appreciable alloy.

I need not go over the details of Von Kempelen’s confession (as far as it went)

and release, for these are familiar to the public. That he has actually realized, in

spirit and in effect, if not to the letter, the old chimaera of the philosopher’s stone, no sane person is at liberty to doubt. The opinions of Arago are, of course,

entitled to the greatest consideration; but he is by no means infallible; and what

he says of bismuth, in his report to the Academy, must be taken cum grano salis.

The simple truth is, that up to this period all analysis has failed; and until Von Kempelen chooses to let us have the key to his own published enigma, it is more

than probable that the matter will remain, for years, in statu quo. All that as yet

can fairly be said to be known is, that ‘Pure gold can be made at will, and very

readily from lead in connection with certain other substances, in kind and in proportions, unknown.'

Speculation, of course, is busy as to the immediate and ultimate results of this

discovery—a discovery which few thinking persons will hesitate in referring to

an increased interest in the matter of gold generally, by the late developments in

California; and this reflection brings us inevitably to another—the exceeding inopportuneness of Von Kempelen's analysis. If many were prevented from

adventuring to California, by the mere apprehension that gold would so

materially diminish in value, on account of its plentifulness in the mines there, as

to render the speculation of going so far in search of it a doubtful one —what impression will be wrought now, upon the minds of those about to emigrate, and

especially upon the minds of those actually in the mineral region, by the announcement of this astounding discovery of Von Kempelen? a discovery

which declares, in so many words, that beyond its intrinsic worth for

manufacturing purposes (whatever that worth may be), gold now is, or at least soon will be (for it cannot be supposed that Von Kempelen can long retain his secret), of no greater value than lead, and of far inferior value to silver. It is, indeed, exceedingly difficult to speculate prospectively upon the consequences of the discovery, but one thing may be positively maintained—that the

announcement of the discovery six months ago would have had material

influence in regard to the settlement of California.

In Europe, as yet, the most noticeable results have been a rise of two hundred

per cent. in the price of lead, and nearly twenty-five per cent. that of silver.

MESMERIC REVELATION

WHATEVER doubt may still envelop the *rationale* of mesmerism, its startling *facts* are now almost universally admitted. Of these latter, those who doubt, are your mere doubters by profession—an unprofitable and disreputable tribe. There can be no more absolute waste of time than the attempt to *prove*, at the present day, that man, by mere exercise of will, can so impress his fellow, as to cast him into an abnormal condition, of which the phenomena resemble very closely those of *death*, or at least resemble them more nearly than they do the phenomena of any other normal condition within our cognizance; that, while in this state, the person so impressed employs only with effort, and then feebly, the external organs of sense, yet perceives, with keenly refined perception, and through channels supposed unknown, matters beyond the scope of the physical organs; that, moreover, his intellectual faculties are wonderfully exalted and invigorated; that his sympathies with the person so impressing him are profound; and, finally, that his susceptibility to the impression increases with its frequency, while, in the same proportion, the peculiar phenomena elicited are more extended and more *pronounced*.

I say that these—which are the laws of mesmerism in its

general features—it would be supererogation to demonstrate; nor shall I

inflict upon my readers so needless a demonstration; to-day. My purpose

at present is a very different one indeed. I am impelled, even in

the teeth of a world of prejudice, to detail without comment the very

remarkable substance of a colloquy, occurring between a sleep-waker and

myself.

I had been long in the habit of mesmerizing the person in

question, (Mr. Vankirk,) and the usual acute susceptibility and

exaltation of the mesmeric perception had supervened. For many months he

had been laboring under confirmed phthisis, the more distressing effects

of which had been relieved by my manipulations; and on the night of

Wednesday, the fifteenth instant, I was summoned to his bedside.

The invalid was suffering with acute pain in the region of the

heart, and breathed with great difficulty, having all the ordinary

symptoms of asthma. In spasms such as these he had usually found relief

from the application of mustard to the nervous centres, but to-night

this had been attempted in vain.

As I entered his room he greeted me with a cheerful smile, and

although evidently in much bodily pain, appeared to be, mentally, quite

at ease.

“I sent for you to-night,” he said, “not so much to administer

to my bodily ailment, as to satisfy me concerning certain psychal impressions which, of late, have occasioned me much anxiety and surprise. I need not tell you how sceptical I have hitherto been on the topic of the soul's immortality. I cannot deny that there has always existed, as if in that very soul which I have been denying, a vague half-sentiment of its own existence. But this half-sentiment at no time amounted to conviction. With it my reason had nothing to do. All attempts at logical inquiry resulted, indeed, in leaving me more sceptical than before. I had been advised to study Cousin. I studied him in his own works as well as in those of his European and American

echoes. The 'Charles Elwood' of Mr. Brownson, for example, was placed

in my hands. I read it with profound attention. Throughout I found it logical, but the portions which were not *merely* logical were unhappily the initial arguments of the disbelieving hero of the book. In his summing up it seemed evident to me that the reasoner had not even succeeded in convincing himself. His end had plainly forgotten his beginning, like the government of Trinculo. In short, I was not long in perceiving that if man is to be intellectually convinced of his own immortality, he will never be so convinced by the mere abstractions which have been so long the fashion of the moralists of England, of France, and of Germany. Abstractions may amuse and exercise, but take no

hold on the mind. Here upon earth, at least, philosophy, I am persuaded,

will always in vain call upon us to look upon qualities as things. The

will may assent—the soul—the intellect, never.

“I repeat, then, that I only half felt, and never intellectually believed. But latterly there has been a certain deepening of the feeling, until it has come so nearly to resemble the acquiescence of reason, that I find it difficult to distinguish between the two. I am enabled, too, plainly to trace this effect to the mesmeric influence. I cannot better explain my meaning than by the hypothesis that the mesmeric exaltation enables me to perceive a train of ratiocination which, in my abnormal existence, convinces, but which, in full accordance with the mesmeric phenomena, does not extend, except through its *effect*, into my normal condition. In sleep-waking, the reasoning and its conclusion—the cause and its effect—are present together. In my natural state, the cause vanishing, the effect only, and perhaps only partially, remains.

“These considerations have led me to think that some good results might ensue from a series of well-directed questions propounded to me while mesmerized. You have often observed the profound self-cognizance evinced by the sleep-waker—the extensive knowledge he displays upon all points relating to the mesmeric condition itself; and from this self-cognizance may be deduced hints for the proper conduct of a catechism.”

I consented of course to make this experiment. A few passes

threw Mr. Vankirk into the mesmeric sleep. His breathing became

immediately more easy, and he seemed to suffer no physical uneasiness.

The following conversation then ensued:—V. in the dialogue representing

the patient, and P. myself.

P. Are you asleep?

V. Yes—no I would rather sleep more soundly.

P. [*After a few more passes.*] Do you sleep now?

V. Yes.

P. How do you think your present illness will result?

V. [*After a long hesitation and speaking as if with effort*.] I must die.

P. Does the idea of death afflict you?

V. [*Very quickly*.] No—no!

P. Are you pleased with the prospect?

V. If I were awake I should like to die, but now it is no matter. The mesmeric condition is so near death as to content me.

P. I wish you would explain yourself, Mr. Vankirk.

V. I am willing to do so, but it requires more effort than I feel able to make.

You do not question me properly.

P. What then shall I ask?

V. You must begin at the beginning.

P. The beginning! but where is the beginning?

V. You know that the beginning is GOD. [*This was said in a low, fluctuating tone, and with every sign of the most profound veneration*.]

P. What then is God?

V. [*Hesitating for many minutes.*] I cannot tell.

P. Is not God spirit?

V. While I was awake I knew what you meant by "spirit," but now it seems only a word—such for instance as truth, beauty—a quality, I mean.

P. Is not God immaterial?

V. There is no immateriality—it is a mere word. That which is not matter, is not at all—unless qualities are things.

P. Is God, then, material?

V. No. [*This reply startled me very much.*]

P. What then is he?

V. [*After a long pause, and mutteringly.*] I see—but it is a thing difficult to tell.

[*Another long pause.*] He is not spirit, for he exists. Nor is he matter, as *you understand it*. But there are *gradations* of matter of which man knows nothing; the grosser impelling the finer, the finer pervading the grosser. The atmosphere,

for example, impels the electric principle, while the electric principle permeates

the atmosphere. These gradations of matter increase in rarity or fineness, until we arrive at a matter *unparticled*—without particles—indivisible— *one* and here the law of impulsion and permeation is modified. The ultimate, or unparticled matter, not only permeates all things but impels all things—and thus *is* all things within itself. This matter is God. What men attempt to embody in the word

"thought," is this matter in motion.

P. The metaphysicians maintain that all action is reducible to motion and thinking, and that the latter is the origin of the former.

V. Yes; and I now see the confusion of idea. Motion is the action of *mind*—not of *thinking*. The unparticled matter, or God, in quiescence, is (as nearly as we can conceive it) what men call mind. And the power of self-movement

(equivalent in effect to human volition) is, in the unparticled matter, the result of its unity and omniprevalence; *how* I know not, and now clearly see that I shall never know. But the unparticled matter, set in motion by a law, or quality, existing within itself, is thinking.

P. Can you give me no more precise idea of what you term the unparticled matter?

V. The matters of which man is cognizant, escape the senses in gradation. We have, for example, a metal, a piece of wood, a drop of water, the atmosphere, a

gas, caloric, electricity, the luminiferous ether. Now we call all these things matter, and embrace all matter in one general definition; but in spite of this, there can be no two ideas more essentially distinct than that which we attach to a metal, and that which we attach to the luminiferous ether. When we reach the latter, we feel an almost irresistible inclination to class it with spirit, or with nihility. The only consideration which restrains us is our conception of its atomic

constitution; and here, even, we have to seek aid from our notion of an atom, as

something possessing in infinite minuteness, solidity, palpability, weight.

Destroy the idea of the atomic constitution and we should no longer be able to

regard the ether as an entity, or at least as matter. For want of a better word we

might term it spirit. Take, now, a step beyond the luminiferous ether —conceive a

matter as much more rare than the ether, as this ether is more rare than the metal,

and we arrive at once (in spite of all the school dogmas) at a unique mass—an

unparticled matter. For although we may admit infinite littleness in the atoms themselves, the infinitude of littleness in the spaces between them is an

absurdity. There will be a point—there will be a degree of rarity, at which, if the

atoms are sufficiently numerous, the interspaces must vanish, and the mass

absolutely coalesce. But the consideration of the atomic constitution being now

taken away, the nature of the mass inevitably glides into what we conceive of spirit. It is clear, however, that it is as fully matter as before. The truth is, it is impossible to conceive spirit, since it is impossible to imagine what is not. When

we flatter ourselves that we have formed its conception, we have merely

deceived our understanding by the consideration of infinitely rarified matter.

P. There seems to me an insurmountable objection to the idea of absolute coalescence;—and that is the very slight resistance experienced by the heavenly

bodies in their revolutions through space—a resistance now ascertained, it is true, to exist in *some* degree, but which is, nevertheless, so slight as to have been quite overlooked by the sagacity even of Newton. We know that the resistance of

bodies is, chiefly, in proportion to their density. Absolute coalescence is absolute

density. Where there are no interspaces, there can be no yielding. An ether,

absolutely dense, would put an infinitely more effectual stop to the progress of a star than would an ether of adamant or of iron.

V. Your objection is answered with an ease which is nearly in the ratio of its apparent unanswerability.—As regards the progress of the star, it can make no difference whether the star passes through the ether *or the ether through it*. There is no astronomical error more unaccountable than that which reconciles the

known retardation of the comets with the idea of their passage through an ether:

for, however rare this ether be supposed, it would put a stop to all sidereal revolution in a very far briefer period than has been admitted by those

astronomers who have endeavored to slur over a point which they found it

impossible to comprehend. The retardation actually experienced is, on the other

hand, about that which might be expected from the *friction* of the ether in the instantaneous passage through the orb. In the one case, the retarding force is momentary and complete within itself—in the other it is endlessly accumulative.

P. But in all this—in this identification of mere matter with God—is there nothing of irreverence? [*I was forced to repeat this question before the sleep-waker fully comprehended my meaning.*]

V. Can you say *why* matter should be less reverenced than mind? But you forget that the matter of which I speak is, in all respects, the very "mind" or

"spirit" of the schools, so far as regards its high capacities, and is, moreover, the

"matter" of these schools at the same time. God, with all the powers attributed to

spirit, is but the perfection of matter.

P. You assert, then, that the unparticled matter, in motion, is thought?

V. In general, this motion is the universal thought of the universal mind. This thought creates. All created things are but the thoughts of God.

P. You say, "in general."

V. Yes. The universal mind is God. For new individualities, *matter* is necessary.

P. But you now speak of "mind" and "matter" as do the metaphysicians.

V. Yes—to avoid confusion. When I say "mind," I mean the unparticled or ultimate matter; by "matter," I intend all else.

P. You were saying that “for new individualities matter is necessary.”

V. Yes; for mind, existing unincorporate, is merely God. To create individual, thinking beings, it was necessary to incarnate portions of the divine mind. Thus

man is individualized. Divested of corporate investiture, he were God. Now, the

particular motion of the incarnated portions of the unparticled matter is the

thought of man; as the motion of the whole is that of God.

P. You say that divested of the body man will be God?

V. [*After much hesitation.*] I could not have said this; it is an absurdity.

P. [*Referring to my notes.*] You *did* say that “divested of corporate investiture man were God.”

V. And this is true. Man thus divested *would be* God—would be unindividualized. But he can never be thus divested—at least never *will be*—else we must imagine an action of God returning upon itself—a purposeless and

futile action. Man is a creature. Creatures are thoughts of God. It is the nature of

thought to be irrevocable.

P. I do not comprehend. You say that man will never put off the body?

V. I say that he will never be bodiless.

P. Explain.

V. There are two bodies—the rudimental and the complete; corresponding with the two conditions of the worm and the butterfly. What we call “death,” is

but the painful metamorphosis. Our present incarnation is progressive,

preparatory, temporary. Our future is perfected, ultimate, immortal. The ultimate

life is the full design.

P. But of the worm's metamorphosis we are palpably cognizant.

V. We, certainly—but not the worm. The matter of which our rudimental body is composed, is within the ken of the organs of that body; or, more distinctly, our

rudimental organs are adapted to the matter of which is formed the rudimental body; but not to that of which the ultimate is composed. The ultimate body thus

escapes our rudimental senses, and we perceive only the shell which falls, in decaying, from the inner form; not that inner form itself; but this inner form, as

well as the shell, is appreciable by those who have already acquired the ultimate

life.

P. You have often said that the mesmeric state very nearly resembles death.

How is this?

V. When I say that it resembles death, I mean that it resembles the ultimate life; for when I am entranced the senses of my rudimental life are in abeyance,

and I perceive external things directly, without organs, through a medium which

I shall employ in the ultimate, unorganized life.

P. Unorganized?

V. Yes; organs are contrivances by which the individual is brought into sensible relation with particular classes and forms of matter, to the exclusion of

other classes and forms. The organs of man are adapted to his rudimental condition, and to that only; his ultimate condition, being unorganized, is of unlimited comprehension in all points but one—the nature of the volition of God

—that is to say, the motion of the unparticled matter. You will have a

distinct idea of the ultimate body by conceiving it to be entire brain. This it is *not*; but a conception of this nature will bring you near a comprehension of what it *is*. A luminous body imparts vibration to the luminiferous ether. The vibrations

generate similar ones within the retina; these again communicate similar ones to

the optic nerve. The nerve conveys similar ones to the brain; the brain, also, similar ones to the unparticled matter which permeates it. The motion of this latter is thought, of which perception is the first undulation. This is the mode by

which the mind of the rudimental life communicates with the external world; and

this external world is, to the rudimental life, limited, through the idiosyncrasy of

its organs. But in the ultimate, unorganized life, the external world reaches the whole body, (which is of a substance having affinity to brain, as I have said,) with no other intervention than that of an infinitely rarer ether than even the luminiferous; and to this ether—in unison with it—the whole body vibrates,

setting in motion the unparticled matter which permeates it. It is to the absence

of idiosyncratic organs, therefore, that we must attribute the nearly unlimited perception of the ultimate life. To rudimental beings, organs are the cages necessary to confine them until fledged.

P. You speak of rudimental "beings." Are there other rudimental thinking beings than man?

V. The multitudinous conglomeration of rare matter into nebulæ, planets, suns, and other bodies which are neither nebulæ, suns, nor planets, is for the sole purpose of supplying *pabulum* for the idiosyncrasy of the organs of an infinity of rudimental beings. But for the necessity of the rudimental, prior to the ultimate

life, there would have been no bodies such as these. Each of these is tenanted by

a distinct variety of organic, rudimental, thinking creatures. In all, the organs vary with the features of the place tenanted. At death, or

metamorphosis, these creatures, enjoying the ultimate life—immortality—and cognizant of all secrets

but *the one*, act all things and pass everywhere by mere volition:—indwelling, not the stars, which to us seem the sole palpabilities, and for the accommodation

of which we blindly deem space created—but that SPACE itself—that infinity of

which the truly substantive vastness swallows up the star-shadows—blotting

them out as non-entities from the perception of the angels.

P. You say that "but for the *necessity* of the rudimental life" there would have been no stars. But why this necessity?

V. In the inorganic life, as well as in the inorganic matter generally, there is nothing to impede the action of one simple *unique* law—the Divine Volition.

With the view of producing impediment, the organic life and matter, (complex,

substantial, and law-encumbered,) were contrived.

P. But again—why need this impediment have been produced?

V. The result of law inviolate is perfection—right—negative happiness. The result of law violate is imperfection, wrong, positive pain. Through the

impediments afforded by the number, complexity, and substantiality of the laws

of organic life and matter, the violation of law is rendered, to a certain extent, practicable. Thus pain, which in the inorganic life is impossible, is possible in the organic.

P. But to what good end is pain thus rendered possible?

V. All things are either good or bad by comparison. A sufficient analysis will show that pleasure, in all cases, is but the contrast of pain. *Positive* pleasure is a mere idea. To be happy at any one point we must have suffered at the same.

Never to suffer would have been never to have been blessed. But it has been shown that, in the inorganic life, pain cannot be thus the necessity for the organic. The pain of the primitive life of Earth, is the sole basis of the bliss of the ultimate life in Heaven.

P. Still, there is one of your expressions which I find it impossible to comprehend—"the truly *substantive* vastness of infinity."

V. This, probably, is because you have no sufficiently generic conception of the term "*substance*" itself. We must not regard it as a quality, but as a sentiment:

—it is the perception, in thinking beings, of the adaptation of matter to their organization. There are many things on the Earth, which would be nihility to the

inhabitants of Venus—many things visible and tangible in Venus, which we

could not be brought to appreciate as existing at all. But to the inorganic beings

—to the angels—the whole of the unparticled matter is substance—that is to say,

the whole of what we term "space" is to them the truest substantiality; —the stars, meantime, through what we consider their materiality, escaping the angelic

sense, just in proportion as the unparticled matter, through what we consider its

immateriality, eludes the organic.

As the sleep-waker pronounced these latter words, in a feeble tone, I observed

on his countenance a singular expression, which somewhat alarmed me, and

induced me to awake him at once. No sooner had I done this, than, with a bright

smile irradiating all his features, he fell back upon his pillow and expired. I noticed that in less than a minute afterward his corpse had all the stern rigidity of

stone. His brow was of the coldness of ice. Thus, ordinarily, should it have appeared, only after long pressure from Azrael's hand. Had the sleep-waker, indeed, during the latter portion of his discourse, been addressing me from out the region of the shadows?

THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF M. VALDEMAR

OF course I shall not pretend to consider it any matter for wonder, that the extraordinary case of M. Valdemar has excited discussion. It would have been a

miracle had it not-especially under the circumstances. Through the desire of all

parties concerned, to keep the affair from the public, at least for the present, or

until we had farther opportunities for investigation—through our endeavors to effect this—a garbled or exaggerated account made its way into society, and became the source of many unpleasant misrepresentations, and, very naturally, of

a great deal of disbelief.

It is now rendered necessary that I give the facts—as far as I comprehend them myself. They are, succinctly, these:

My attention, for the last three years, had been repeatedly drawn to the subject

of Mesmerism; and, about nine months ago it occurred to me, quite suddenly, that in the series of experiments made hitherto, there had been a very remarkable

and most unaccountable omission:—no person had as yet been mesmerized in

articulo mortis. It remained to be seen, first, whether, in such condition, there existed in the patient any susceptibility to the magnetic influence; secondly, whether, if any existed, it was impaired or increased by the condition; thirdly, to

what extent, or for how long a period, the encroachments of Death might be arrested by the process. There were other points to be ascertained, but these most

excited my curiosity—the last in especial, from the immensely important

character of its consequences.

In looking around me for some subject by whose means I might test these

particulars, I was brought to think of my friend, M. Ernest Valdemar, the well-

known compiler of the “Bibliotheca Forensica,” and author (under the nom de plume of Issachar Marx) of the Polish versions of “Wallenstein” and

“Gargantua.” M. Valdemar, who has resided principally at Harlaem, N.Y., since

the year 1839, is (or was) particularly noticeable for the extreme spareness of his

person—his lower limbs much resembling those of John Randolph; and, also, for

the whiteness of his whiskers, in violent contrast to the blackness of his hair—

the latter, in consequence, being very generally mistaken for a wig. His

temperament was markedly nervous, and rendered him a good subject for

mesmeric experiment. On two or three occasions I had put him to sleep with little difficulty, but was disappointed in other results which his peculiar

constitution had naturally led me to anticipate. His will was at no period positively, or thoroughly, under my control, and in regard to clairvoyance, I could accomplish with him nothing to be relied upon. I always attributed my failure at these points to the disordered state of his health. For some months previous to my becoming acquainted with him, his physicians had declared him

in a confirmed phthisis. It was his custom, indeed, to speak calmly of his approaching dissolution, as of a matter neither to be avoided nor

regretted.

When the ideas to which I have alluded first occurred to me, it was of course

very natural that I should think of M. Valdemar. I knew the steady philosophy of

the man too well to apprehend any scruples from him; and he had no relatives in

America who would be likely to interfere. I spoke to him frankly upon the subject; and, to my surprise, his interest seemed vividly excited. I say to my surprise, for, although he had always yielded his person freely to my

experiments, he had never before given me any tokens of sympathy with what I

did. His disease was of that character which would admit of exact calculation in

respect to the epoch of its termination in death; and it was finally arranged between us that he would send for me about twenty-four hours before the period

announced by his physicians as that of his decease.

It is now rather more than seven months since I received, from M. Valdemar

himself, the subjoined note:

My DEAR P—-,

You may as well come now. D—— and F—— are agreed that I cannot hold

out beyond to-morrow midnight; and I think they have hit the time very nearly.

VALDEMAR

I received this note within half an hour after it was written, and in fifteen minutes more I was in the dying man’s chamber. I had not seen him for ten days,

and was appalled by the fearful alteration which the brief interval had wrought in

him. His face wore a leaden hue; the eyes were utterly lustreless; and the emaciation was so extreme that the skin had been broken through by the cheek-bones. His expectoration was excessive. The pulse was barely perceptible. He retained, nevertheless, in a very remarkable manner, both his mental power and a

certain degree of physical strength. He spoke with distinctness—took some

palliative medicines without aid—and, when I entered the room, was occupied in

penciling memoranda in a pocket-book. He was propped up in the bed by

pillows. Doctors D—— and F—— were in attendance.

After pressing Valdemar's hand, I took these gentlemen aside, and obtained

from them a minute account of the patient's condition. The left lung had been for

eighteen months in a semi-osseous or cartilaginous state, and was, of course, entirely useless for all purposes of vitality. The right, in its upper portion, was also partially, if not thoroughly, ossified, while the lower region was merely a mass of purulent tubercles, running one into another. Several extensive

perforations existed; and, at one point, permanent adhesion to the ribs had taken

place. These appearances in the right lobe were of comparatively recent date.

The ossification had proceeded with very unusual rapidity; no sign of it had been

discovered a month before, and the adhesion had only been observed during the

three previous days. Independently of the phthisis, the patient was suspected of

aneurism of the aorta; but on this point the osseous symptoms rendered an exact

diagnosis impossible. It was the opinion of both physicians that M. Valdemar would die about midnight on the morrow (Sunday). It was then seven o'clock on

Saturday evening.

On quitting the invalid's bed-side to hold conversation with myself, Doctors D

—— and F—— had bidden him a final farewell. It had not been their intention

to return; but, at my request, they agreed to look in upon the patient about ten the

next night.

When they had gone, I spoke freely with M. Valdemar on the subject of his approaching dissolution, as well as, more particularly, of the experiment

proposed. He still professed himself quite willing and even anxious to have it made, and urged me to commence it at once. A male and a female nurse were in

attendance; but I did not feel myself altogether at liberty to engage in a task of

this character with no more reliable witnesses than these people, in case of sudden accident, might prove. I therefore postponed operations until about eight

the next night, when the arrival of a medical student with whom I had some acquaintance, (Mr. Theodore L—l,) relieved me from farther embarrassment. It

had been my design, originally, to wait for the physicians; but I was induced to

proceed, first, by the urgent entreaties of M. Valdemar, and secondly, by my conviction that I had not a moment to lose, as he was evidently sinking fast.

Mr. L—l was so kind as to accede to my desire that he would take

notes of all

that occurred, and it is from his memoranda that what I now have to relate is, for

the most part, either condensed or copied verbatim.

It wanted about five minutes of eight when, taking the patient's hand, I begged

him to state, as distinctly as he could, to Mr. L—l, whether he (M. Valdemar) was entirely willing that I should make the experiment of mesmerizing him in his then condition.

He replied feebly, yet quite audibly, "Yes, I wish to be. I fear you have mesmerized"—adding immediately afterwards, "deferred it too long."

While he spoke thus, I commenced the passes which I had already found most effectual in subduing him. He was evidently influenced with the first lateral stroke of my hand across his forehead; but although I exerted all my powers, no

further perceptible effect was induced until some minutes after ten o'clock, when

Doctors D— and F— called, according to appointment. I explained to them, in a

few words, what I designed, and as they opposed no objection, saying that the patient was already in the death agony, I proceeded without hesitation—

exchanging, however, the lateral passes for downward ones, and directing my gaze entirely into the right eye of the sufferer.

By this time his pulse was imperceptible and his breathing was stertorous, and

at intervals of half a minute.

This condition was nearly unaltered for a quarter of an hour. At the expiration

of this period, however, a natural although a very deep sigh escaped the bosom

of the dying man, and the stertorous breathing ceased—that is to say,

its stertorousness was no longer apparent; the intervals were undiminished. The

patient's extremities were of an icy coldness.

At five minutes before eleven I perceived unequivocal signs of the mesmeric

influence. The glassy roll of the eye was changed for that expression of uneasy

inward examination which is never seen except in cases of sleep-waking, and which it is quite impossible to mistake. With a few rapid lateral passes I made the lids quiver, as in incipient sleep, and with a few more I closed them altogether. I was not satisfied, however, with this, but continued the

manipulations vigorously, and with the fullest exertion of the will, until I had completely stiffened the limbs of the slumberer, after placing them in a

seemingly easy position. The legs were at full length; the arms were nearly so,

and reposed on the bed at a moderate distance from the loin. The head was very

slightly elevated.

When I had accomplished this, it was fully midnight, and I requested the

gentlemen present to examine M. Valdemar's condition. After a few

experiments, they admitted him to be an unusually perfect state of mesmeric trance. The curiosity of both the physicians was greatly excited. Dr. D——

resolved at once to remain with the patient all night, while Dr. F—— took leave

with a promise to return at daybreak. Mr. L—l and the nurses remained.

We left M. Valdemar entirely undisturbed until about three o'clock in the

morning, when I approached him and found him in precisely the same condition

as when Dr. F—went away—that is to say, he lay in the same position; the pulse

was imperceptible; the breathing was gentle (scarcely noticeable, unless through

the application of a mirror to the lips); the eyes were closed naturally; and the

limbs were as rigid and as cold as marble. Still, the general appearance was certainly not that of death.

As I approached M. Valdemar I made a kind of half effort to influence his right arm into pursuit of my own, as I passed the latter gently to and fro above

his person. In such experiments with this patient, I had never perfectly succeeded

before, and assuredly I had little thought of succeeding now; but to my

astonishment, his arm very readily, although feebly, followed every direction I assigned it with mine. I determined to hazard a few words of conversation.

“M. Valdemar,” I said, “are you asleep?” He made no answer, but I perceived

a tremor about the lips, and was thus induced to repeat the question, again and

again. At its third repetition, his whole frame was agitated by a very slight shivering; the eyelids unclosed themselves so far as to display a white line of the

ball; the lips moved sluggishly, and from between them, in a barely audible whisper, issued the words:

“Yes;—asleep now. Do not wake me!—let me die so!”

I here felt the limbs and found them as rigid as ever. The right arm, as before,

obeyed the direction of my hand. I questioned the sleep-waker again:

“Do you still feel pain in the breast, M. Valdemar?”

The answer now was immediate, but even less audible than before: “No pain

—I am dying.”

I did not think it advisable to disturb him farther just then, and nothing more

was said or done until the arrival of Dr. F—, who came a little before sunrise, and expressed unbounded astonishment at finding the patient still alive. After feeling the pulse and applying a mirror to the lips, he requested me to speak to

the sleep-waker again. I did so, saying:

“M. Valdemar, do you still sleep?”

As before, some minutes elapsed ere a reply was made; and during the interval

the dying man seemed to be collecting his energies to speak. At my fourth repetition of the question, he said very faintly, almost inaudibly:

“Yes; still asleep—dying.”

It was now the opinion, or rather the wish, of the physicians, that M. Valdemar

should be suffered to remain undisturbed in his present apparently tranquil condition, until death should supervene—and this, it was generally agreed, must

now take place within a few minutes. I concluded, however, to speak to him once more, and merely repeated my previous question.

While I spoke, there came a marked change over the countenance of the sleep-

waker. The eyes rolled themselves slowly open, the pupils disappearing upwardly; the skin generally assumed a cadaverous hue, resembling not so much

parchment as white paper; and the circular hectic spots which, hitherto, had been

strongly defined in the centre of each cheek, went out at once. I use this expression, because the suddenness of their departure put me in mind of nothing

so much as the extinguishment of a candle by a puff of the breath. The upper lip,

at the same time, writhed itself away from the teeth, which it had previously covered completely; while the lower jaw fell with an audible jerk, leaving the mouth widely extended, and disclosing in full view the swollen and blackened tongue. I presume that no member of the party then present had been

unaccustomed to death-bed horrors; but so hideous beyond conception was the appearance of M. Valdemar at this moment, that there was a general shrinking back from the region of the bed.

I now feel that I have reached a point of this narrative at which every reader

will be startled into positive disbelief. It is my business, however, simply to proceed.

There was no longer the faintest sign of vitality in M. Valdemar; and

concluding him to be dead, we were consigning him to the charge of the nurses,

when a strong vibratory motion was observable in the tongue. This continued for

perhaps a minute. At the expiration of this period, there issued from the distended and motionless jaws a voice—such as it would be madness in me to attempt describing. There are, indeed, two or three epithets which might be considered as applicable to it in part; I might say, for example, that the sound was harsh, and broken and hollow; but the hideous whole is indescribable, for the simple reason that no similar sounds have ever jarred upon the ear of humanity. There were two particulars, nevertheless, which I thought then, and still think, might fairly be stated as characteristic of the intonation—as well adapted to convey some idea of its unearthly peculiarity. In the first place, the voice seemed to reach our ears—at least mine—from a vast distance, or from some deep cavern within the earth. In the second

place, it impressed me (I fear,

indeed, that it will be impossible to make myself comprehended) as gelatinous or

glutinous matters impress the sense of touch.

I have spoken both of “sound” and of “voice.” I mean to say that the sound was one of distinct—of even wonderfully, thrillingly distinct—syllabification.

M. Valdemar spoke—obviously in reply to the question I had propounded to him

a few minutes before. I had asked him, it will be remembered, if he still slept. He

now said:

“Yes;—no;—I have been sleeping—and now—now—I am dead.”

No person present even affected to deny, or attempted to repress, the unutterable, shuddering horror which these few words, thus uttered, were so well

calculated to convey. Mr. L—l (the student) swooned. The nurses immediately left the chamber, and could not be induced to return. My own impressions I would not pretend to render intelligible to the reader. For nearly an hour, we busied ourselves, silently—without the utterance of a word—in endeavors to

revive Mr. L—l. When he came to himself, we addressed ourselves again to an

investigation of M. Valdemar’s condition.

It remained in all respects as I have last described it, with the exception that

the mirror no longer afforded evidence of respiration. An attempt to draw blood

from the arm failed. I should mention, too, that this limb was no farther subject

to my will. I endeavored in vain to make it follow the direction of my hand. The

only real indication, indeed, of the mesmeric influence, was now found in the vibratory movement of the tongue, whenever I addressed M. Valdemar a

question. He seemed to be making an effort to reply, but had no longer sufficient

volition. To queries put to him by any other person than myself he seemed utterly insensible—although I endeavored to place each member of the company

in mesmeric rapport with him. I believe that I have now related all that is necessary to an understanding of the sleep-waker's state at this epoch. Other nurses were procured; and at ten o'clock I left the house in company with the two physicians and Mr. L—l.

In the afternoon we all called again to see the patient. His condition remained

precisely the same. We had now some discussion as to the propriety and

feasibility of awakening him; but we had little difficulty in agreeing that no good

purpose would be served by so doing. It was evident that, so far, death (or what

is usually termed death) had been arrested by the mesmeric process. It seemed clear to us all that to awaken M. Valdemar would be merely to insure his instant,

or at least his speedy dissolution.

From this period until the close of last week—an interval of nearly seven months—we continued to make daily calls at M. Valdemar's house,

accompanied, now and then, by medical and other friends. All this time the sleeper-waker remained exactly as I have last described him. The nurses'

attentions were continual.

It was on Friday last that we finally resolved to make the experiment of awakening or attempting to awaken him; and it is the (perhaps)

unfortunate result of this latter experiment which has given rise to so much discussion in private circles—to so much of what I cannot help thinking unwarranted popular

feeling.

For the purpose of relieving M. Valdemar from the mesmeric trance, I made use of the customary passes. These, for a time, were unsuccessful. The first indication of revival was afforded by a partial descent of the iris. It was observed, as especially remarkable, that this lowering of the pupil was

accompanied by the profuse out-flowing of a yellowish ichor (from beneath the

lids) of a pungent and highly offensive odor.

It was now suggested that I should attempt to influence the patient's arm, as

heretofore. I made the attempt and failed. Dr. F—then intimated a desire to have

me put a question. I did so, as follows:

"M. Valdemar, can you explain to us what are your feelings or wishes now?"

There was an instant return of the hectic circles on the cheeks; the tongue quivered, or rather rolled violently in the mouth (although the jaws and lips remained rigid as before;) and at length the same hideous voice which I have already described, broke forth:

"For God's sake!—quick!—quick!—put me to sleep—or, quick!—waken me!

—quick!—I say to you that I am dead!"

I was thoroughly unnerved, and for an instant remained undecided what to do.

At first I made an endeavor to re-compose the patient; but, failing in this through

total abeyance of the will, I retraced my steps and as earnestly struggled to awaken him. In this attempt I soon saw that I should be successful—or at least I

soon fancied that my success would be complete—and I am sure that all in the

room were prepared to see the patient awaken.

For what really occurred, however, it is quite impossible that any human being

could have been prepared.

As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of “dead! dead!”

absolutely bursting from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once—within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk

—crumbled—absolutely rotted away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before

that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable

putridity.

THE BLACK CAT.

FOR the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not—and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburthen my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and

without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences,

these events have terrified—have tortured—have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but Horror—to many

they will seem less terrible than *barroques*. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the common-place—some

intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will

perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary

succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition.

My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my

companions. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents

with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was

so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew

with my growth, and in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and

sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish

and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who

has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere *Man*.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not

uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no

opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, gold-

fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and *a cat*.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who

at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the

ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not

that she was ever *serious* upon this point—and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

Pluto—this was the cat's name—was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone

fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with

difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my

general temperament and character—through the instrumentality of the Fiend

Intemperance—had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the

worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At

length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating

him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when by accident, or through affection, they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like Alcohol!—and at length even

Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even

Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about

town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth.

The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My

original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from

my waistcoat-pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat,

and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning—when I had slept off the fumes of

the night's debauch—I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse,

for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again plunged into excess,

and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye

presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer

any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so

loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to

my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that

my soul lives, than I

am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart—one

of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not?

Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate

that which is *Law*, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable

longing of the soul *to vex itself*—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to

consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning,

in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;—

hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at

my heart;—hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I felt it had given me no reason of offence;—hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was

committing a sin—a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to

place it—if such a thing wore possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from

sleep by the cry of fire. The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house

was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and

myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My

entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to

despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and

effect, between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts—

and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the

fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The

plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire—a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words “strange!”

“singular!” and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity. I approached and

saw, as if graven in *bas relief* upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic *cat*.

The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvellous. There was a rope

about the animal’s neck.

When I first beheld this apparition—for I could scarcely regard it as less—my

wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid.

The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon

the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd—by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed

the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly-spread plaster; the lime

of which, with the flames, and the *ammonia* from the carcass, had then accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my

conscience, for the startling fact just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the

phantasm of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half-sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the

loss of the animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.

One night as I sat, half stupified, in a den of more than infamy, my attention

was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the

immense hogsheads of Gin, or of Rum, which constituted the chief furniture of

the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some

minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It

was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely

resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair

upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite splotch of white,

covering nearly the whole region of the breast. Upon my touching him, he

immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared

delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no

claim to it—knew nothing of it—had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and, when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced

a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so; occasionally stooping and

patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just

the reverse of what I had anticipated; but—I know not how or why it was—its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed. By slow degrees,

these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for

some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill use it; but gradually—very

gradually—I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently

from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one

of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I

have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult

to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair, or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or,

fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly—

let me confess it at once—by absolute dread of the beast.

This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil—and yet I should be at a

loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own—yes, even in this

felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own—that the terror and horror with which

the animal inspired me, had been heightened by one of the merest chimaeras it

would be possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention, more than once,

to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees—degrees nearly

imperceptible, and which for a long time my Reason struggled to reject as fanciful—it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of

outline. It was now

the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I

loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster *had I dared*—it was now, I say, the image of a hideous—of a ghastly thing—of the GALLOWS!

—oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime—of Agony and of

Death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere Humanity.

And *a brute beast* —whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed— *a brute beast* to work out for *me*—for me a man, fashioned in the image of the High God

—so much of insufferable wo! Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of Rest any more! During the former the creature left me no moment alone; and, in the latter, I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of *the thing* upon my face, and its vast weight—an incarnate Night-Mare that I had no power to shake off—incumbent eternally upon my

heart!

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these, the feeble remnant of the good

within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and

most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of

all things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent, and

ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my

uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of

the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me

down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which

had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in

her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire

deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it

from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by

the neighbors. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of

cutting the corpse into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire. At

another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it in the well in the yard—about packing it in a box, as

if merchandize, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than

either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar—as the monks of the middle ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely

constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which

the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up, and made to resemble the red of the cellar. I made no doubt

that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall

the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect any thing suspicious. And in

this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crow-bar I easily dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while, with little trouble, I re-laid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand, and hair, with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from

the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brickwork. When I had

finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself—“Here

at least, then, my labor has not been in vain.”

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much

wretchedness; for I had, at length, firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been

able to meet with it, at the moment, there could have been no doubt of its fate;

but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger, and forebore to present itself in my present mood. It is

impossible to describe, or to imagine, the deep, the blissful sense of relief which

the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its

appearance during the night—and thus for one night at least, since its

introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, slept even with

the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once

again I breathed as a freeman. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises forever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my

dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these

had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted—but of course nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous

investigation of the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place

of concealment, I felt no embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me

accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not

in a muscle. My heart beat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I

walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if

but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their

assurance of

my guiltlessness.

“Gentlemen,” I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, “I delight to have

allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By the

bye, gentlemen, this—this is a very well constructed house.” [In the rabid desire

to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.]—“I may say an *excellently* well constructed house. These walls—are you going, gentlemen?—

these walls are solidly put together;” and here, through the mere phrenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very

portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No

sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered

by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the

sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous

scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl—a wailing shriek, half of

horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly

from the throats of the dammed in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite

wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next, a dozen stout arms were toiling at the

wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me

into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had

walled the monster up within the tomb!

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Son coeur est un luth suspendu;

Sitôt qu'on le touche il rèsonne..

De Béranger.

DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing

alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length

found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the

melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse

of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say

insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the

sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before

me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—

upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few

rank

sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression

of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the

hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of

the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the

imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the

unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was

possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to

annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more

thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray

sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of

some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last

meeting. A

letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country —a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him—and

of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend,

with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of

his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said—it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request—which allowed me no room

for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very

singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind,

for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in

many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of

munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognisable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the

stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line

of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises

with the accredited character of

the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in

the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating

transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher”—an appellation which

seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and

the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment—that of

looking down within the tarn—had been to deepen the first singular impression.

There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the

increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments

having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew

in my mind a strange fancy—a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it

to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked

upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate

vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven,

but which

had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn—a

pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of

an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of

the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between

its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual

stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old

wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the

eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure,

which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the

wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in

waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of

stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and

intricate

passages in my progress to the *studio* of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which

I have already spoken. While the objects around me—while the carvings of the

ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and

the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters

to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy —while I

hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this—I still wondered to find

how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one

of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought,

wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with

trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into

the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken

floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned

light made their way through the trellissed panes, and served to render

sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however,

struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of

the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general

furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and

musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and

irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full

length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first

thought, of an overdone cordiality—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé* man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect

sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon

him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before

me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had

been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but

of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a

breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking,

in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more

than web-

like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the

regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be

forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these

features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change

that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now

miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with

effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence—an

inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy—an excessive nervous agitation.

For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter,

than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately

vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision

(when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic

concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation—

that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may

be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the

periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see

me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length,

into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy

—a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly

soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these,

as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms,

and the general manner of the narration had their weight. He suffered much from

a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he

could wear only garments of certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him

with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. “I shall

perish,” said he, “I must perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but

in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved—

in this pitiable condition—I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I

must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm,

FEAR."

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints,

another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and

whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence

whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be restated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of

his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim

tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar

gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more

palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness—indeed to the

evidently approaching dissolution—of a tenderly beloved sister—his sole

companion for long years—his last and only relative on earth. "Her

decease," he

said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, "would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers." While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote

portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared.

I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread—and yet I

found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed

me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother—but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a

far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians.

A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character, were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady,

and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but, on the closing in of the evening

of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with

inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I

should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher

or

myself: and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the

melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a

dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his

spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon

all objects of the moral and physical universe, in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent

alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to

convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring

forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly,

because I shuddered knowing not why;—from these paintings (vivid as their

images now are before me) I would in vain endeavor to educe more than a small

portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me

at least—in the circumstances then surrounding me—there arose out of the pure

abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvass, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the

contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly

of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A

small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault

or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device.

Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and

bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which

rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the

fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid *facility* of his *impromptus* could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as

well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied

himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense

mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable

only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one

of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly

impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on

the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled “The Haunted Palace,” ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:

I.

In the greenest of our valleys,

By good angels tenanted,

Once a fair and stately palace—

Radiant palace—reared its head.

In the monarch Thought’s dominion—

It stood there!

Never seraph spread a pinion

Over fabric half so fair.

II.

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,

On its roof did float and flow;

(This—all this—was in the olden

Time long ago)

And every gentle air that dallied,

In that sweet day,

Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,

A winged odor went away.

III.

Wanderers in that happy valley

Through two luminous windows saw

Spirits moving musically

To a lute's well-tunéd law,

Round about a throne, where sitting

(Porphyrogene!)

In state his glory well befitting,

The ruler of the realm was seen.

IV.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing

Was the fair palace door,

Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,

And sparkling evermore,

A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty

Was but to sing,

In voices of surpassing beauty,

The wit and wisdom of their king.

V.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,

Assailed the monarch's high estate;

(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow

Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)

And, round about his home, the glory

That blushed and bloomed

Is but a dim-remembered story

Of the old time entombed.

VI.

And travellers now within that valley,

Through the red-litten windows, see

Vast forms that move fantastically

To a discordant melody;

While, like a rapid ghastly river,

Through the pale door,

A hideous throng rush out forever,

And laugh—but smile no more.

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad, led us into a train of

thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I mention

not so much on account of its novelty, (for other men * have thought thus,) as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed,

under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest *abandon* of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the

home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these

stones—in the order of

their arrangement, as well as in that of the many *fungi* which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around—above all, in the long undisturbed

endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the

tarn. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentience—was to be seen, he said, (and I

here started as he spoke,) in the gradual yet certain condensation of an

atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was

discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him*

what I now saw him—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will

make none.

* Watson, Dr. Percival, Spallanzani, and especially the Bishop of Landaff.—

See “Chemical Essays,” vol v.

Our books—the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the

mental existence of the invalid—were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the Ververt et Chartreuse of Gresset; the Belphegor of Machiavelli; the Heaven and

Hell of Swedenborg; the Subterranean Voyage of Nicholas Klimm by Holberg;

the Chiromancy of Robert Flud, of Jean D’Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; the

Journey into the Blue Distance of Tieck; and the City of the Sun of

Campanella.

One favorite volume was a small octavo edition of the *Directorium*

Inquisitorium, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages

in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Satyrs and OEgipans, over which

Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the

perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic—the manual of

a forgotten church—the *Vigiliae Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiae*

Maguntinae.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when, one evening, having informed me

abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of

preserving her corpse for a fortnight, (previously to its final interment,) in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason,

however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at

liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by

consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain

obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote

and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon

the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it

to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us

little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means

of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of

the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used,

apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and,

in later days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible

substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of

massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an

unusually sharp grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of

horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked

upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister

now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that

the deceased and

himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had

always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus

entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a

strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and

the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in

death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner

had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed

from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor

of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue—but the

luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of

his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought

his unceasingly agitated mind was laboring with some oppressive secret, to

divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of

madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest

attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive

superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth

day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced

the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch—while the hours

waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavored to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible

tremor gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, harkened—I know not why, except that an

instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which

came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence.

Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable,

I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the

night), and endeavored to arouse myself from the pitiable condition

into which I

had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognised it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entered, bearing

a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan—but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes—an evidently restrained *hysteria* in his whole demeanor. His air appalled me—but anything was preferable to the

solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

“And you have not seen it?” he said abruptly, after having stared about him for

some moments in silence—“you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall.”

Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was,

indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its

terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity

with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this—yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars—nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge

masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us,

were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

“You must not—you shall not behold this!” said I, shudderingly, to Usher, as I

led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. “These appearances,

which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon —or it may

be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close

this casement;—the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of

your favorite romances. I will read, and you shall listen;—and so we will pass away this terrible night together.”

The antique volume which I had taken up was the “Mad Trist” of Sir

Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favorite of Usher’s more in sad jest than

in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It

was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope

that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for

the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the

extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with which he harkened, or apparently

harkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred,

the hero

of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of

the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:

“And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now

mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had

drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of

an obstinate and maliceful turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now

pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarummed and reverberated

throughout the forest.”

At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment, paused; for it

appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had

deceived me)—it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact

similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very

cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It

was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for,

amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:

“But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore

enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the maliceful hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanor, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver; and

upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten—

Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin;

Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win;

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon,

which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and

harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard.”

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for

there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up

for the dragon’s unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which

wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained

sufficient presence

of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my

companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in

question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanor. From a position fronting my own, he had

gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that

his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly. His head had dropped upon

his breast—yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening

of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was

at variance with this idea—for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the

narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded:

“And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon,

bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the

enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before

him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where

the shield was upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but

feel down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound.”

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had

indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of

a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled

reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured

rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole

countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering

murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length

drank in the hideous import of his words.

“Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me,

miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many,

many days ago—yet I dared not— *I dared not speak!* And now—to-night—

Ethelred—ha! ha!—the breaking of the hermit’s door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangor of the shield!—say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and

the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered

archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she

not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the

stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart?

Madman!"—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables,

as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—"*Madman! I tell you that she now*

stands without the door! "

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell—the huge antique pannels to which the speaker pointed,

threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the

work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her

white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her

emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the

person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him

to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still

abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind

me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now

shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have

before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a

long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of

the "*House of Usher*."

SILENCE—A FABLE

ALCMAN. The mountain pinnacles slumber; valleys, crags and

caves are silent.

"LISTEN to me," said the Demon as he placed his hand upon my head. "The

region of which I speak is a dreary region in Libya, by the borders of the river

Zaire. And there is no quiet there, nor silence.

"The waters of the river have a saffron and sickly hue; and they flow not onwards to the sea, but palpitate forever and forever beneath the red eye of the

sun with a tumultuous and convulsive motion. For many miles on either side of

the river's oozy bed is a pale desert of gigantic water-lilies. They sigh one unto

the other in that solitude, and stretch towards the heaven their long and ghastly

necks, and nod to and fro their everlasting heads. And there is an indistinct murmur which cometh out from among them like the rushing of subterrene

water. And they sigh one unto the other.

“But there is a boundary to their realm—the boundary of the dark, horrible, lofty forest. There, like the waves about the Hebrides, the low underwood is agitated continually. But there is no wind throughout the heaven. And the tall primeval trees rock eternally hither and thither with a crashing and mighty sound. And from their high summits, one by one, drop everlasting dews. And at

the roots strange poisonous flowers lie writhing in perturbed slumber. And

overhead, with a rustling and loud noise, the gray clouds rush westwardly

forever, until they roll, a cataract, over the fiery wall of the horizon. But there is no wind throughout the heaven. And by the shores of the river Zaire there is neither quiet nor silence.

“It was night, and the rain fell; and falling, it was rain, but, having fallen, it was blood. And I stood in the morass among the tall and the rain fell upon my

head—and the lilies sighed one unto the other in the solemnity of their

desolation.

“And, all at once, the moon arose through the thin ghastly mist, and was crimson in color. And mine eyes fell upon a huge gray rock which stood by the

shore of the river, and was lighted by the light of the moon. And the rock was gray, and ghastly, and tall,—and the rock was gray. Upon its front were

characters engraven in the stone; and I walked through the morass of water-lilies,

until I came close unto the shore, that I might read the characters upon the stone.

But I could not decypher them. And I was going back into the morass, when the

moon shone with a fuller red, and I turned and looked again upon the rock, and upon the characters;—and the characters were DESOLATION.

“And I looked upwards, and there stood a man upon the summit of the rock;

and I hid myself among the water-lilies that I might discover the actions of the

man. And the man was tall and stately in form, and was wrapped up from his shoulders to his feet in the toga of old Rome. And the outlines of his figure were

indistinct—but his features were the features of a deity; for the mantle of the night, and of the mist, and of the moon, and of the dew, had left uncovered the

features of his face. And his brow was lofty with thought, and his eye wild with

care; and, in the few furrows upon his cheek I read the fables of sorrow, and weariness, and disgust with mankind, and a longing after solitude.

“And the man sat upon the rock, and leaned his head upon his hand, and

looked out upon the desolation. He looked down into the low unquiet shrubbery,

and up into the tall primeval trees, and up higher at the rustling heaven, and into

the crimson moon. And I lay close within shelter of the lilies, and observed the

actions of the man. And the man trembled in the solitude;—but the night waned,

and he sat upon the rock.

“And the man turned his attention from the heaven, and looked out upon the

dreary river Zaire, and upon the yellow ghastly waters, and upon the pale legions

of the water-lilies. And the man listened to the sighs of the water-lilies, and to the murmur that came up from among them. And I lay close within my covert and observed the actions of the man. And the

man trembled in the solitude;—but

the night waned and he sat upon the rock.

“Then I went down into the recesses of the morass, and waded afar in among

the wilderness of the lilies, and called unto the hippopotami which dwelt among

the fens in the recesses of the morass. And the hippopotami heard my call, and

came, with the behemoth, unto the foot of the rock, and roared loudly and fearfully beneath the moon. And I lay close within my covert and observed the

actions of the man. And the man trembled in the solitude;—but the night waned

and he sat upon the rock.

“Then I cursed the elements with the curse of tumult; and a frightful tempest

gathered in the heaven where, before, there had been no wind. And the heaven

became livid with the violence of the tempest—and the rain beat upon the head

of the man—and the floods of the river came down—and the river was

tormented into foam—and the water-lilies shrieked within their beds —and the

forest crumbled before the wind—and the thunder rolled—and the lightning fell

—and the rock rocked to its foundation. And I lay close within my covert and observed the actions of the man. And the man trembled in the solitude;—but the

night waned and he sat upon the rock.

“Then I grew angry and cursed, with the curse of silence, the river, and the lilies, and the wind, and the forest, and the heaven, and the

thunder, and the sighs

of the water-lilies. And they became accursed, and were still. And the moon ceased to totter up its pathway to heaven—and the thunder died away—and the

lightning did not flash—and the clouds hung motionless—and the waters sunk to

their level and remained—and the trees ceased to rock—and the water-lilies

sighed no more—and the murmur was heard no longer from among them, nor

any shadow of sound throughout the vast illimitable desert. And I looked upon

the characters of the rock, and they were changed;—and the characters were SILENCE.

“And mine eyes fell upon the countenance of the man, and his countenance

was wan with terror. And, hurriedly, he raised his head from his hand, and stood

forth upon the rock and listened. But there was no voice throughout the vast illimitable desert, and the characters upon the rock were SILENCE. And the man

shuddered, and turned his face away, and fled afar off, in haste, so that I beheld

him no more.”

Now there are fine tales in the volumes of the Magi—in the iron-bound,

melancholy volumes of the Magi. Therein, I say, are glorious histories of the Heaven, and of the Earth, and of the mighty sea—and of the Genii that over-ruled the sea, and the earth, and the lofty heaven. There was much lore too in the

sayings which were said by the Sybils; and holy, holy things were heard of old

by the dim leaves that trembled around Dodona—but, as Allah liveth, that fable

which the Demon told me as he sat by my side in the shadow of the tomb, I hold

to be the most wonderful of all! And as the Demon made an end of his story, he

fell back within the cavity of the tomb and laughed. And I could not laugh with

the Demon, and he cursed me because I could not laugh. And the lynx which dwelleth forever in the tomb, came out therefrom, and lay down at the feet of the

Demon, and looked at him steadily in the face.

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH.

THE “Red Death” had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever

been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal—the redness and

the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body

and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out

from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure,

progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his

dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale

and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his

castellated abbeys. This was

an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric

yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron.

The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded

the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress or egress to the sudden

impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned.

With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The

external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or

to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were

musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within.

Without was the "Red Death."

It was toward the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while

the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained

his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms

in which it was held. There were seven—an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide

back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is

scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different; as might have been expected

from the duke's love of the bizarre. The apartments were so irregularly disposed

that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right

and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows

were of stained glass whose color varied in accordance with the prevailing hue

of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example, in blue—and vividly blue were its windows.

The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements.

The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange—the fifth with white—the

sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only, the

color of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here

were scarlet—a deep blood color. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay

scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind

emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors

that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and

fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-

light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was

ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot

within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall, a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and

the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the

orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to

hearken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and

there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of

the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or

meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering

vows, each to the other,

that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes, (which embrace three thousand and six

hundred seconds of the Time that flies,) there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of

the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colors and effects. He disregarded

the decora of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad.

His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the moveable embellishments of the seven

chambers, upon occasion of this great fete; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque.

There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm—much of what

has been since seen in “Hernani.” There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman

fashions. There was much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these—the dreams—writhed in and about, taking hue

from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo

of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall

of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away—they have endured but an instant —and a light, half-subdued

laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from

the many-tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to

the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven, there are now none of the

maskers who venture; for the night is waning away; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-colored panes; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the

near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which

reaches their ears who indulge in the more remote gaieties of the other

apartments.

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly

the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there

commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted; and there

was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps, that

more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the

thoughtful

among those who revelled. And thus, too, it happened, perhaps, that before the

last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence

of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumor of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur,

expressive of disapprobation and surprise—then, finally, of terror, of horror, and

of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed

that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade license of the night was nearly unlimited; but the figure in question

had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's

indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and

death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and

bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and

gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask

which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a

stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in

detecting the

cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the

Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood—and his broad brow, with all the

features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which with a

slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, stalked to and fro

among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.

“Who dares?” he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him

—“who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask

him—that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise, from the

battlements!”

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly—

for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at

the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the prince, with a group of pale courtiers

by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who at the moment was also near at hand,

and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker.

But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the

mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth

hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterruptedly, but with the

same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first,

through the blue chamber to the purple—through the purple to the green—

through the green to the orange—through this again to the white—and even

thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was

then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of

his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while

none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer.

There was a sharp cry—and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet,

upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero.

Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revellers at once

threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall

figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped

in unutterable horror at finding the grave-cerements and corpse-like mask which

they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like

a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed

halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the

life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames

of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held

illimitable dominion over all.

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO.

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he

ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my

soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled—but the very

definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not

only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution

overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make

himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face,

and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man

to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionaires*. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere.

In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for

he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I

was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his

hand.

I said to him—"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well

you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for

Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the

carnival!”

“I have my doubts,” I replied; “and I was silly enough to pay the full

Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain.”

“Amontillado!”

“I have my doubts.”

“Amontillado!”

“And I must satisfy them.”

“Amontillado!”

“As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me—”

“Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.”

“And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.”

“Come, let us go.”

“Whither?”

“To your vaults.”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have

an engagement. Luchesi—”

“I have no engagement;—come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted

with nitre.”

“Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have

been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry

from

Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of

black silk, and drawing a *roquelaire* closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in

honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and

had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as

soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed

him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he

followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the

damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he

strode.

"The pipe," said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from

these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs

that

distilled the rheum of intoxication.

“Nitre?” he asked, at length.

“Nitre,” I replied. “How long have you had that cough?”

“Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh!

ugh! ugh!”

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

“It is nothing,” he said, at last.

“Come,” I said, with decision, “we will go back; your health is precious. You

are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I

cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi—”

“Enough,” he said; “the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not

die of a cough.”

“True—true,” I replied; “and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you

unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc

will defend us from the damps.”

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its

fellows that lay upon the mould.

“Drink,” I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me

familiarly, while his bells jingled.

“I drink,” he said, “to the buried that repose around us.”

“And I to your long life.”

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

“These vaults,” he said, “are extensive.”

“The Montresors,” I replied, “were a great and numerous family.”

“I forget your arms.”

“A huge human foot d’or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant

whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.”

“And the motto?”

“*Nemo me impune lacessit.*”

“Good!” he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm

with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

“The nitre!” I said: “see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We

are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come,

we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough—”

“It is nothing,” he said; “let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc.”

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grâve. He emptied it at a breath. His

eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a

gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

“You do not comprehend?” he said.

“Not I,” I replied.

“Then you are not of the brotherhood.”

“How?”

“You are not of the masons.”

“Yes, yes,” I said, “yes, yes.”

“You? Impossible! A mason?”

“A mason,” I replied.

“A sign,” he said.

“It is this,” I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire*.

“You jest,” he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. “But let us proceed to the Amontillado.”

“Be it so,” I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him

my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the

wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use in itself, but

formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depths of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

“Proceed,” I said; “herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi—”

“He is an ignoramus,” interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily

forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached

the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its

surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet,

horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a

padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I

stepped back from the recess.

“Pass your hand,” I said, “over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre.

Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.”

“The Amontillado!” ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his

astonishment.

“True,” I replied; “the Amontillado.”

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have

before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of my masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication

I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the

cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations

of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon

the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished

without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now

nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of

the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the

recess: but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamorer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had

completed the

eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It

was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognising as that of the

noble Fortunato. The voice said—

“Ha! ha! ha!—he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will

have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—

he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late?

Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let

us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“*For the love of God, Montressor!* ”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God!”

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called

aloud—

“Fortunato!”

No answer. I called again—

“Fortunato!”

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall

within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end

of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no

mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*

THE IMP OF THE PERVERSE

IN THE consideration of the faculties and impulses—of the prima mobilia of

the human soul, the phrenologists have failed to make room for a propensity which, although obviously existing as a radical, primitive, irreducible sentiment,

has been equally overlooked by all the moralists who have preceded them. In the

pure arrogance of the reason, we have all overlooked it. We have suffered its existence to escape our senses, solely through want of belief—of faith;—

whether it be faith in Revelation, or faith in the Kabbala. The idea of it has never

occurred to us, simply because of its supererogation. We saw no need of the impulse—for the propensity. We could not perceive its necessity. We could not

understand, that is to say, we could not have understood, had the notion of this

primum mobile ever obtruded itself;—we could not have understood in what

manner it might be made to further the objects of humanity, either temporal or eternal. It cannot be denied that phrenology and, in great measure, all

metaphysicianism have been concocted a priori. The intellectual or

logical man,

rather than the understanding or observant man, set himself to imagine designs—

to dictate purposes to God. Having thus fathomed, to his satisfaction, the intentions of Jehovah, out of these intentions he built his innumerable systems of

mind. In the matter of phrenology, for example, we first determined, naturally enough, that it was the design of the Deity that man should eat. We then assigned

to man an organ of alimentiveness, and this organ is the scourge with which the

Deity compels man, will-I nill-I, into eating. Secondly, having settled it to be God's will that man should continue his species, we discovered an organ of amativeness, forthwith. And so with combativeness, with ideality, with causality,

with constructiveness,—so, in short, with every organ, whether representing a propensity, a moral sentiment, or a faculty of the pure intellect. And in these arrangements of the Principia of human action, the Spurzheimites, whether right

or wrong, in part, or upon the whole, have but followed, in principle, the footsteps of their predecessors: deducing and establishing every thing from the preconceived destiny of man, and upon the ground of the objects of his Creator.

It would have been wiser, it would have been safer, to classify (if classify we

must) upon the basis of what man usually or occasionally did, and was always occasionally doing, rather than upon the basis of what we took it for granted the

Deity intended him to do. If we cannot comprehend God in his visible works, how then in his inconceivable thoughts, that call the works into being? If we

cannot understand him in his objective creatures, how then in his substantive moods and phases of creation?

Induction, a posteriori, would have brought phrenology to admit, as

an innate

and primitive principle of human action, a paradoxical something, which we

may call perverseness, for want of a more characteristic term. In the sense I intend, it is, in fact, a mobile without motive, a motive not motivirt. Through its

promptings we act without comprehensible object; or, if this shall be understood

as a contradiction in terms, we may so far modify the proposition as to say, that

through its promptings we act, for the reason that we should not. In theory, no reason can be more unreasonable, but, in fact, there is none more strong. With certain minds, under certain conditions, it becomes absolutely irresistible. I am not more certain that I breathe, than that the assurance of the wrong or error of

any action is often the one unconquerable force which impels us, and alone impels us to its prosecution. Nor will this overwhelming tendency to do wrong

for the wrong's sake, admit of analysis, or resolution into ulterior elements. It is

a radical, a primitive impulse-elementary. It will be said, I am aware, that when

we persist in acts because we feel we should not persist in them, our conduct is

but a modification of that which ordinarily springs from the combativeness of phrenology. But a glance will show the fallacy of this idea. The phrenological combativeness has for its essence, the necessity of self-defence. It is our safeguard against injury. Its principle regards our well-being; and thus the desire

to be well is excited simultaneously with its development. It follows, that the desire to be well must be excited simultaneously with any principle which shall

be merely a modification of combativeness, but in the case of that something which I term perverseness, the desire to be well is not only

not aroused, but a strongly antagonistical sentiment exists.

An appeal to one's own heart is, after all, the best reply to the sophistry just

noticed. No one who trustingly consults and thoroughly questions his own soul,

will be disposed to deny the entire radicalness of the propensity in question. It is

not more incomprehensible than distinctive. There lives no man who at some period has not been tormented, for example, by an earnest desire to tantalize a listener by circumlocution. The speaker is aware that he displeases; he has every

intention to please, he is usually curt, precise, and clear, the most laconic and luminous language is struggling for utterance upon his tongue, it is only with difficulty that he restrains himself from giving it flow; he dreads and deprecates

the anger of him whom he addresses; yet, the thought strikes him, that by certain

involutions and parentheses this anger may be engendered. That single thought is

enough. The impulse increases to a wish, the wish to a desire, the desire to an

uncontrollable longing, and the longing (to the deep regret and mortification of the speaker, and in defiance of all consequences) is indulged.

We have a task before us which must be speedily performed. We know that it

will be ruinous to make delay. The most important crisis of our life calls, trumpet-tongued, for immediate energy and action. We glow, we are consumed

with eagerness to commence the work, with the anticipation of whose glorious result our whole souls are on fire. It must, it shall be undertaken to-day, and yet

we put it off until to-morrow, and why? There is no answer, except

that we feel

perverse, using the word with no comprehension of the principle. To-morrow

arrives, and with it a more impatient anxiety to do our duty, but with this very increase of anxiety arrives, also, a nameless, a positively fearful, because unfathomable, craving for delay. This craving gathers strength as the moments fly. The last hour for action is at hand. We tremble with the violence of the conflict within us,—of the definite with the indefinite—of the substance with the

shadow. But, if the contest have proceeded thus far, it is the shadow which prevails,—we struggle in vain. The clock strikes, and is the knell of our welfare.

At the same time, it is the chanticleer—note to the ghost that has so long overawed us. It flies—it disappears—we are free. The old energy returns. We will labor now. Alas, it is too late!

We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss—we grow sick

and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger. Unaccountably we remain. By slow degrees our sickness and dizziness and horror become merged

in a cloud of unnamable feeling. By gradations, still more imperceptible, this cloud assumes shape, as did the vapor from the bottle out of which arose the genius in the Arabian Nights. But out of this our cloud upon the precipice's edge,

there grows into palpability, a shape, far more terrible than any genius or any demon of a tale, and yet it is but a thought, although a fearful one, and one which

chills the very marrow of our bones with the fierceness of the delight of its horror. It is merely the idea of what would be our sensations during the sweeping

precipitancy of a fall from such a height. And this fall—this rushing annihilation

—for the very reason that it involves that one most ghastly and loathsome of all

the most ghastly and loathsome images of death and suffering which have ever

presented themselves to our imagination—for this very cause do we now the

most vividly desire it. And because our reason violently deters us from the brink,

therefore do we the most impetuously approach it. There is no passion in nature

so demoniacally impatient, as that of him who, shuddering upon the edge of a precipice, thus meditates a Plunge. To indulge, for a moment, in any attempt at

thought, is to be inevitably lost; for reflection but urges us to forbear, and

therefore it is, I say, that we cannot. If there be no friendly arm to check us, or if we fail in a sudden effort to prostrate ourselves backward from the abyss, we plunge, and are destroyed.

Examine these similar actions as we will, we shall find them resulting solely

from the spirit of the Perverse. We perpetrate them because we feel that we should not. Beyond or behind this there is no intelligible principle; and we might, indeed, deem this perverseness a direct instigation of the Arch-Fiend, were it not occasionally known to operate in furtherance of good.

I have said thus much, that in some measure I may answer your question, that

I may explain to you why I am here, that I may assign to you something that shall have at least the faint aspect of a cause for my wearing these fetters, and for my tenanting this cell of the condemned. Had I not been thus prolix, you might

either have misunderstood me altogether, or, with the rabble, have fancied me mad. As it is, you will easily perceive that I am one of the many uncounted victims of the Imp of the Perverse.

It is impossible that any deed could have been wrought with a more thorough

deliberation. For weeks, for months, I pondered upon the means of the murder. I

rejected a thousand schemes, because their accomplishment involved a chance of

detection. At length, in reading some French Memoirs, I found an account of a

nearly fatal illness that occurred to Madame Pilau, through the agency of a candle accidentally poisoned. The idea struck my fancy at once. I knew my victim's habit of reading in bed. I knew, too, that his apartment was narrow and

ill-ventilated. But I need not vex you with impertinent details. I need not describe the easy artifices by which I substituted, in his bed-room candle-stand, a

wax-light of my own making for the one which I there found. The next morning

he was discovered dead in his bed, and the Coroner's verdict was —"Death by the visitation of God."

Having inherited his estate, all went well with me for years. The idea of detection never once entered my brain. Of the remains of the fatal taper I had myself carefully disposed. I had left no shadow of a clew by which it would be

possible to convict, or even to suspect me of the crime. It is inconceivable how

rich a sentiment of satisfaction arose in my bosom as I reflected upon my absolute security. For a very long period of time I was accustomed to revel in this sentiment. It afforded me more real delight than all the mere worldly advantages accruing from my sin. But there arrived at length an epoch, from which the pleasurable feeling grew, by scarcely perceptible gradations, into a haunting and harassing thought. It harassed because it haunted. I could scarcely

get rid of it for an instant. It is quite a common thing to be thus annoyed with the

ringing in our ears, or rather in our memories, of the burthen of some ordinary song, or some unimpressive snatches from an opera. Nor will we be the less tormented if the song in itself be good, or the opera air meritorious. In this manner, at last, I would perpetually catch myself pondering upon my security, and repeating, in a low undertone, the

phrase, “I am safe.”

One day, whilst sauntering along the streets, I arrested myself in the act of murmuring, half aloud, these customary syllables. In a fit of petulance, I remodelled them thus; “I am safe—I am safe—yes—if I be not fool enough to make open confession!”

No sooner had I spoken these words, than I felt an icy chill creep to my heart.

I had had some experience in these fits of perversity, (whose nature I have been

at some trouble to explain), and I remembered well that in no instance I had successfully resisted their attacks. And now my own casual self-suggestion that I

might possibly be fool enough to confess the murder of which I had been guilty,

confronted me, as if the very ghost of him whom I had murdered—and beckoned

me on to death.

At first, I made an effort to shake off this nightmare of the soul. I walked vigorously—faster—still faster—at length I ran. I felt a maddening desire to shriek aloud. Every succeeding wave of thought overwhelmed me with new

terror, for, alas! I well, too well understood that to think, in my situation, was to be lost. I still quickened my pace. I bounded like a madman through the crowded

thoroughfares. At length, the populace took the alarm, and pursued me. I felt then the consummation of my fate. Could I have torn out my tongue, I would have done it, but a rough voice resounded in my ears —a rougher grasp seized me by the shoulder. I turned—I gasped for breath. For a moment I experienced

all the pangs of suffocation; I became blind, and deaf, and giddy; and then some

invisible fiend, I thought, struck me with his broad palm upon the back. The long

imprisoned secret burst forth from my soul.

They say that I spoke with a distinct enunciation, but with marked emphasis and passionate hurry, as if in dread of interruption before concluding the brief, but pregnant sentences that consigned me to the hangman and to hell.

Having related all that was necessary for the fullest judicial conviction, I fell

prostrate in a swoon.

But why shall I say more? To-day I wear these chains, and am here! To-

morrow I shall be fetterless!—but where?

THE ISLAND OF THE FAY

Nullus enim locus sine genio est.— *Servius*.

“LA MUSIQUE,” says Marmontel, in those “Contes Moraux” (*1) which in

all our translations, we have insisted upon calling “Moral Tales,” as if in mockery of their spirit—“la musique est le seul des talents qui jouissent de lui-meme; tous les autres veulent des temoins.” He here confounds the pleasure derivable from sweet sounds with the capacity for creating them. No more than

any other talent, is that for music susceptible of complete enjoyment, where there is no second party to appreciate its exercise. And it is only in common with

other talents that it produces effects which may be fully enjoyed in solitude. The

idea which the raconteur has either failed to entertain clearly, or has sacrificed in its expression to his national love of point, is, doubtless, the very tenable one that the higher order of music is the most thoroughly estimated when we are exclusively alone. The proposition, in this form, will be admitted at once by those who love the lyre for its own sake, and for its spiritual uses. But there is

one pleasure still within the reach of fallen mortality and perhaps only one—

which owes even more than does music to the accessory sentiment of seclusion.

I mean the happiness experienced in the contemplation of natural scenery. In truth, the man who would behold aright the glory of God upon earth must in solitude behold that glory. To me, at least, the presence—not of human life only,

but of life in any other form than that of the green things which grow upon the

soil and are voiceless—is a stain upon the landscape—is at war with the genius

of the scene. I love, indeed, to regard the dark valleys, and the gray rocks, and

the waters that silently smile, and the forests that sigh in uneasy slumbers, and the proud watchful mountains that look down upon all, —I love to regard these as

themselves but the colossal members of one vast animate and sentient whole—a

whole whose form (that of the sphere) is the most perfect and most inclusive of

all; whose path is among associate planets; whose meek handmaiden is the

moon, whose mediate sovereign is the sun; whose life is eternity, whose thought

is that of a God; whose enjoyment is knowledge; whose destinies are lost in immensity, whose cognizance of ourselves is akin with our own cognizance of the animalculae which infest the brain—a being which we, in consequence,

regard as purely inanimate and material much in the same manner as these

animalculae must thus regard us.

Our telescopes and our mathematical investigations assure us on every hand—

notwithstanding the cant of the more ignorant of the priesthood—that

space, and therefore that bulk, is an important consideration in the eyes of the Almighty.

The cycles in which the stars move are those best adapted for the evolution, without collision, of the greatest possible number of bodies. The forms of those

bodies are accurately such as, within a given surface, to include the greatest possible amount of matter;—while the surfaces themselves are so disposed as to

accommodate a denser population than could be accommodated on the same

surfaces otherwise arranged. Nor is it any argument against bulk being an object

with God, that space itself is infinite; for there may be an infinity of matter to fill it. And since we see clearly that the endowment of matter with vitality is a principle—indeed, as far as our judgments extend, the leading principle in the operations of Deity,—it is scarcely logical to imagine it confined to the regions

of the minute, where we daily trace it, and not extending to those of the august.

As we find cycle within cycle without end,—yet all revolving around one far-distant centre which is the God-head, may we not analogically suppose in the same manner, life within life, the less within the greater, and all within the Spirit Divine? In short, we are madly erring, through self-esteem, in believing man, in

either his temporal or future destinies, to be of more moment in the universe than

that vast “clod of the valley” which he tills and contemns, and to which he denies a soul for no more profound reason than that he does not behold it in operation. (*2)

These fancies, and such as these, have always given to my meditations among

the mountains and the forests, by the rivers and the ocean, a tinge of what the everyday world would not fail to term fantastic. My wanderings amid such

scenes have been many, and far-searching, and often solitary; and the interest with which I have strayed through many a dim, deep valley, or gazed into the reflected Heaven of many a bright lake, has been an interest greatly deepened by

the thought that I have strayed and gazed alone. What flippant Frenchman was it

who said in allusion to the well-known work of Zimmerman, that, “la solitude est une belle chose; mais il faut quelqu’un pour vous dire que la solitude est une

belle chose?” The epigram cannot be gainsayed; but the necessity is a thing that

does not exist.

It was during one of my lonely journeyings, amid a far distant region of mountain locked within mountain, and sad rivers and melancholy tarn writhing

or sleeping within all—that I chanced upon a certain rivulet and island. I came

upon them suddenly in the leafy June, and threw myself upon the turf, beneath

the branches of an unknown odorous shrub, that I might doze as I contemplated

the scene. I felt that thus only should I look upon it—such was the character of

phantasm which it wore.

On all sides—save to the west, where the sun was about sinking—arose the

verdant walls of the forest. The little river which turned sharply in its course, and was thus immediately lost to sight, seemed to have no exit from its prison, but to

be absorbed by the deep green foliage of the trees to the east—while in the opposite quarter (so it appeared to me as I lay at length and glanced upward) there poured down noiselessly and continuously into the valley, a rich golden and crimson waterfall from the sunset

fountains of the sky.

About midway in the short vista which my dreamy vision took in, one small

circular island, profusely verdured, reposed upon the bosom of the stream.

So blended bank and shadow there

That each seemed pendulous in air—so mirror-like was the glassy water, that

it was scarcely possible to say at what point upon the slope of the emerald turf its

crystal dominion began.

My position enabled me to include in a single view both the eastern and

western extremities of the islet; and I observed a singularly-marked difference in

their aspects. The latter was all one radiant harem of garden beauties. It glowed

and blushed beneath the eyes of the slant sunlight, and fairly laughed with flowers. The grass was short, springy, sweet-scented, and Asphodel-interspersed.

The trees were lithe, mirthful, erect—bright, slender, and graceful,—of eastern figure and foliage, with bark smooth, glossy, and parti-colored. There seemed a

deep sense of life and joy about all; and although no airs blew from out the heavens, yet every thing had motion through the gentle sweepings to and fro of

innumerable butterflies, that might have been mistaken for tulips with wings.

(*4)

The other or eastern end of the isle was whelmed in the blackest shade. A sombre, yet beautiful and peaceful gloom here pervaded all things. The trees were dark in color, and mournful in form and

attitude, wreathing themselves into

sad, solemn, and spectral shapes that conveyed ideas of mortal sorrow and

untimely death. The grass wore the deep tint of the cypress, and the heads of its

blades hung droopingly, and hither and thither among it were many small

unsightly hillocks, low and narrow, and not very long, that had the aspect of graves, but were not; although over and all about them the rue and the rosemary

clambered. The shade of the trees fell heavily upon the water, and seemed to bury itself therein, impregnating the depths of the element with darkness. I fancied that each shadow, as the sun descended lower and lower, separated itself

sullenly from the trunk that gave it birth, and thus became absorbed by the

stream; while other shadows issued momently from the trees, taking the place of their predecessors thus entombed.

This idea, having once seized upon my fancy, greatly excited it, and I lost myself forthwith in revery. “If ever island were enchanted,” said I to myself,

“this is it. This is the haunt of the few gentle Fays who remain from the wreck of

the race. Are these green tombs theirs?—or do they yield up their sweet lives as

mankind yield up their own? In dying, do they not rather waste away

mournfully, rendering unto God, little by little, their existence, as these trees render up shadow after shadow, exhausting their substance unto dissolution?

What the wasting tree is to the water that imbibes its shade, growing thus blacker

by what it preys upon, may not the life of the Fay be to the death which engulfs

it?”

As I thus mused, with half-shut eyes, while the sun sank rapidly to rest, and

eddying currents careered round and round the island, bearing upon their bosom

large, dazzling, white flakes of the bark of the sycamore-flakes which, in their multiform positions upon the water, a quick imagination might have converted into any thing it pleased, while I thus mused, it appeared to me that the form of

one of those very Fays about whom I had been pondering made its way slowly

into the darkness from out the light at the western end of the island. She stood

erect in a singularly fragile canoe, and urged it with the mere phantom of an oar.

While within the influence of the lingering sunbeams, her attitude seemed

indicative of joy—but sorrow deformed it as she passed within the shade. Slowly

she glided along, and at length rounded the islet and re-entered the region of light. “The revolution which has just been made by the Fay,” continued I, musingly, “is the cycle of the brief year of her life. She has floated through her

winter and through her summer. She is a year nearer unto Death; for I did not fail

to see that, as she came into the shade, her shadow fell from her, and was swallowed up in the dark water, making its blackness more black.”

And again the boat appeared and the Fay, but about the attitude of the latter there was more of care and uncertainty and less of elastic joy. She floated again

from out the light and into the gloom (which deepened momently) and again her

shadow fell from her into the ebony water, and became absorbed into its

blackness. And again and again she made the circuit of the island, (while the sun

rushed down to his slumbers), and at each issuing into the light there was more

sorrow about her person, while it grew feebler and far fainter and more

indistinct, and at each passage into the gloom there fell from her a darker shade,

which became whelmed in a shadow more black. But at length when the sun had

utterly departed, the Fay, now the mere ghost of her former self, went

disconsolately with her boat into the region of the ebony flood, and that she issued thence at all I cannot say, for darkness fell over all things and I beheld her magical figure no more.

THE ASSIGNATION

Stay for me there! I will not fail.

To meet thee in that hollow vale.

[*Exequy on the death of his wife, by Henry King,*

Bishop of Chichester.]

ILL-FATED and mysterious man!—bewildered in the brilliancy of thine own

imagination, and fallen in the flames of thine own youth! Again in fancy I behold thee! Once more thy form hath risen before me!—not—oh not as thou art

—in the cold valley and shadow—but as thou *shouldst be*—squandering away a

life of magnificent meditation in that city of dim visions, thine own Venice—

which is a star-beloved Elysium of the sea, and the wide windows of whose Palladian palaces look down with a deep and bitter meaning upon the secrets of

her silent waters. Yes! I repeat it—as thou *shouldst be*. There are surely other worlds than this—other thoughts than the thoughts of the multitude—other

speculations than the speculations of the sophist. Who then shall call thy conduct

into question? who blame thee for thy visionary hours, or denounce those

occupations as a wasting away of life, which were but the overflowings of thine

everlasting energies?

It was at Venice, beneath the covered archway there called the *Ponte di Sospiri*, that I met for the third or fourth time the person of whom I speak. It is with a confused recollection that I bring to mind the circumstances of that meeting. Yet I remember—ah! how should I forget?—the deep midnight, the

Bridge of Sighs, the beauty of woman, and the Genius of Romance that stalked

up and down the narrow canal.

It was a night of unusual gloom. The great clock of the Piazza had sounded the fifth hour of the Italian evening. The square of the Campanile lay silent and

deserted, and the lights in the old Ducal Palace were dying fast away. I was returning home from the Piazetta, by way of the Grand Canal. But as my

gondola arrived opposite the mouth of the canal San Marco, a female voice from

its recesses broke suddenly upon the night, in one wild, hysterical, and long continued shriek. Startled at the sound, I sprang upon my feet: while the gondolier, letting slip his single oar, lost it in the pitchy darkness beyond a chance of recovery, and we were consequently left to the guidance of the current

which here sets from the greater into the smaller channel. Like some huge and sable-feathered condor, we were slowly drifting down towards the Bridge of

Sighs, when a thousand flambeaux flashing from the windows, and down the staircases of the Ducal Palace, turned all at once that deep gloom into a livid and

preternatural day.

A child, slipping from the arms of its own mother, had fallen from an upper window of the lofty structure into the deep and dim canal. The quiet waters had

closed placidly over their victim; and, although my own gondola was the only one in sight, many a stout swimmer, already in the stream, was seeking in vain

upon the surface, the treasure which was to be found, alas! only within the abyss.

Upon the broad black marble flagstones at the entrance of the palace, and a few

steps above the water, stood a figure which none who then saw can have ever since forgotten. It was the Marchesa Aphrodite—the adoration of all Venice—

the gayest of the gay—the most lovely where all were beautiful—but still the young wife of the old and intriguing Mentoni, and the mother of that fair child,

her first and only one, who now, deep beneath the murky water, was thinking in

bitterness of heart upon her sweet caresses, and exhausting its little life in struggles to call upon her name.

She stood alone. Her small, bare, and silvery feet gleamed in the black mirror

of marble beneath her. Her hair, not as yet more than half loosened for the night

from its ball-room array, clustered, amid a shower of diamonds, round and round

her classical head, in curls like those of the young hyacinth. A snowy-white and

gauze-like drapery seemed to be nearly the sole covering to her delicate form; but the mid-summer and midnight air was hot, sullen, and still, and no motion in

the statue-like form itself, stirred even the folds of that raiment of very vapor which hung around it as the heavy marble hangs around the Niobe. Yet—strange

to say!—her large lustrous eyes were not turned downwards upon that grave

wherein her brightest hope lay buried—but riveted in a widely different

direction! The prison of the Old Republic is, I think, the stateliest building in all Venice—but how could that lady gaze so fixedly upon it, when beneath her lay

stifling her only child? Yon dark, gloomy niche, too, yawns right opposite her chamber window—what, then, *could* there be in its shadows—in its architecture

—in its ivy-wreathed and solemn cornices—that the Marchesa di Mentoni had

not wondered at a thousand times before? Nonsense!—Who does not remember

that, at such a time as this, the eye, like a shattered mirror, multiplies the images of its sorrow, and sees in innumerable far-off places, the woe which is close at

hand?

Many steps above the Marchesa, and within the arch of the water-gate, stood,

in full dress, the Satyr-like figure of Mentoni himself. He was occasionally occupied in thrumming a guitar, and seemed *ennuye* to the very death, as at

intervals he gave directions for the recovery of his child. Stupified and aghast, I had myself no power to move from the upright position I had

assumed upon first

hearing the shriek, and must have presented to the eyes of the agitated group a

spectral and ominous appearance, as with pale countenance and rigid limbs, I floated down among them in that funereal gondola.

All efforts proved in vain. Many of the most energetic in the search were relaxing their exertions, and yielding to a gloomy sorrow. There seemed but little

hope for the child; (how much less than for the mother!) but now, from the interior of that dark niche which has been already mentioned as forming a part of

the Old Republican prison, and as fronting the lattice of the Marchesa, a figure

muffled in a cloak, stepped out within reach of the light, and, pausing a moment

upon the verge of the giddy descent, plunged headlong into the canal. As, in an

instant afterwards, he stood with the still living and breathing child within his grasp, upon the marble flagstones by the side of the Marchesa, his cloak, heavy

with the drenching water, became unfastened, and, falling in folds about his feet,

discovered to the wonder-stricken spectators the graceful person of a very young

man, with the sound of whose name the greater part of Europe was then ringing.

No word spoke the deliverer. But the Marchesa! She will now receive her

child—she will press it to her heart—she will cling to its little form, and smother

it with her caresses. Alas! *another's* arms have taken it from the stranger—

another's arms have taken it away, and borne it afar off, unnoticed, into the palace! And the Marchesa! Her lip—her beautiful lip trembles: tears are

gathering in her eyes—those eyes which, like Pliny's acanthus, are "soft and almost liquid." Yes! tears are gathering in those eyes—and see! the entire woman thrills throughout the soul, and the statue has started into life! The pallor

of the marble countenance, the swelling of the marble bosom, the very purity of

the marble feet, we behold suddenly flushed over with a tide of ungovernable crimson; and a slight shudder quivers about her delicate frame, as a gentle air at

Napoli about the rich silver lilies in the grass.

Why *should* that lady blush! To this demand there is no answer—except that,

having left, in the eager haste and terror of a mother's heart, the privacy of her

own *boudoir*, she has neglected to enthral her tiny feet in their slippers, and utterly forgotten to throw over her Venetian shoulders that drapery which is their

due. What other possible reason could there have been for her so blushing?—for

the glance of those wild appealing eyes? for the unusual tumult of that throbbing

bosom?—for the convulsive pressure of that trembling hand?—that hand which

fell, as Mentoni turned into the palace, accidentally, upon the hand of the stranger. What reason could there have been for the low—the singularly low

tone of those unmeaning words which the lady uttered hurriedly in bidding him adieu? "Thou hast conquered," she said, or the murmurs of the water deceived me; "thou hast conquered—one hour after sunrise—we shall meet—so let it be!"

The tumult had subsided, the lights had died away within the palace, and the

stranger, whom I now recognized, stood alone upon the flags. He shook with inconceivable agitation, and his eye glanced around in search of a gondola. I could not do less than offer him the service of my own; and he accepted the civility. Having obtained an oar at the water-gate, we proceeded together to his

residence, while he rapidly recovered his self-possession, and spoke of our former slight acquaintance in terms of great apparent cordiality.

There are some subjects upon which I take pleasure in being minute. The

person of the stranger—let me call him by this title, who to all the world was still a stranger—the person of the stranger is one of these subjects. In height he

might have been below rather than above the medium size: although there were

moments of intense passion when his frame actually *expanded* and belied the assertion. The light, almost slender symmetry of his figure, promised more of that ready activity which he evinced at the Bridge of Sighs, than of that Herculean strength which he has been known to wield without an effort, upon occasions of more dangerous emergency. With the mouth and chin of a deity—

singular, wild, full, liquid eyes, whose shadows varied from pure hazel to intense

and brilliant jet—and a profusion of curling, black hair, from which a forehead

of unusual breadth gleamed forth at intervals all light and ivory—his were features than which I have seen none more classically regular, except, perhaps,

the marble ones of the Emperor Commodus. Yet his countenance was,

nevertheless, one of those which all men have seen at some period of their lives,

and have never afterwards seen again. It had no peculiar—it had no settled predominant expression to be fastened upon the memory; a

countenance seen

and instantly forgotten—but forgotten with a vague and never-ceasing desire of

recalling it to mind. Not that the spirit of each rapid passion failed, at any time,

to throw its own distinct image upon the mirror of that face—but that the mirror,

mirror-like, retained no vestige of the passion, when the passion had departed.

Upon leaving him on the night of our adventure, he solicited me, in what I thought an urgent manner, to call upon him *very* early the next morning. Shortly after sunrise, I found myself accordingly at his Palazzo, one of those huge structures of gloomy, yet fantastic pomp, which tower above the waters of the Grand Canal in the vicinity of the Rialto. I was shown up a broad winding staircase of mosaics, into an apartment whose unparalleled splendor burst

through the opening door with an actual glare, making me blind and dizzy with luxuriousness.

I knew my acquaintance to be wealthy. Report had spoken of his possessions

in terms which I had even ventured to call terms of ridiculous exaggeration. But

as I gazed about me, I could not bring myself to believe that the wealth of any

subject in Europe could have supplied the princely magnificence which burned

and blazed around.

Although, as I say, the sun had arisen, yet the room was still brilliantly lighted

up. I judge from this circumstance, as well as from an air of exhaustion in the countenance of my friend, that he had not retired to bed during the whole of the

preceding night. In the architecture and embellishments of the

chamber, the evident design had been to dazzle and astound. Little attention had been paid to

the *decora* of what is technically called *keeping*, or to the proprieties of nationality. The eye wandered from object to object, and rested upon none—

neither the *grotesques* of the Greek painters, nor the sculptures of the best Italian days, nor the huge carvings of untutored Egypt. Rich draperies in every part of

the room trembled to the vibration of low, melancholy music, whose origin was

not to be discovered. The senses were oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, reeking up from strange convolute censers, together with

multitudinous flaring and flickering tongues of emerald and violet fire. The rays

of the newly risen sun poured in upon the whole, through windows, formed each

of a single pane of crimson-tinted glass. Glancing to and fro, in a thousand reflections, from curtains which rolled from their cornices like cataracts of molten silver, the beams of natural glory mingled at length fitfully with the artificial light, and lay weltering in subdued masses upon a carpet of rich, liquid-looking cloth of Chili gold.

“Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!”—laughed the proprietor, motioning me to a seat as

I entered the room, and throwing himself back at full-length upon an ottoman. “I

see,” said he, perceiving that I could not immediately reconcile myself to the *bienseance* of so singular a welcome—“I see you are astonished at my apartment

—at my statues—my pictures—my originality of conception in architecture and

upholstery! absolutely drunk, eh, with my magnificence? But pardon me, my

dear sir, (here his tone of voice dropped to the very spirit of cordiality,) pardon

me for my uncharitable laughter. You appeared so *utterly* astonished. Besides, some things are so completely ludicrous, that a man *must* laugh or die. To die laughing, must be the most glorious of all glorious deaths! Sir Thomas More—a

very fine man was Sir Thomas More—Sir Thomas More died laughing, you

remember. Also in the *Absurdities* of Ravisius Textor, there is a long list of

characters who came to the same magnificent end. Do you know, however,"

continued he musingly, "that at Sparta (which is now Palæ; ochori,) at Sparta, I

say, to the west of the citadel, among a chaos of scarcely visible ruins, is a kind

of *socle*, upon which are still legible the letters *AAEM*. They are undoubtedly part of *PEAAEMA*. Now, at Sparta were a thousand temples and shrines to a thousand different divinities. How exceedingly strange that the altar of Laughter

should have survived all the others! But in the present instance," he resumed, with a singular alteration of voice and manner, "I have no right to be merry at your expense. You might well have been amazed. Europe cannot produce

anything so fine as this, my little regal cabinet. My other apartments are by no

means of the same order—mere *ultras* of fashionable insipidity. This is better than fashion—is it not? Yet this has but to be seen to become the rage—that is,

with those who could afford it at the cost of their entire patrimony. I have guarded, however, against any such profanation. With one exception, you are the

only human being besides myself and my *valet*, who has been admitted within the mysteries of these imperial precincts, since they

have been bedizzened as you see!”

I bowed in acknowledgment—for the overpowering sense of splendor and

perfume, and music, together with the unexpected eccentricity of his address and

manner, prevented me from expressing, in words, my appreciation of what I

might have construed into a compliment.

“Here,” he resumed, arising and leaning on my arm as he sauntered around the

apartment, “here are paintings from the Greeks to Cimabue, and from Cimabue

to the present hour. Many are chosen, as you see, with little deference to the opinions of Virtu. They are all, however, fitting tapestry for a chamber such as

this. Here, too, are some *chefs d’oeuvre* of the unknown great; and here, unfinished designs by men, celebrated in their day, whose very names the

perspicacity of the academies has left to silence and to me. What think you,” said

he, turning abruptly as he spoke—“what think you of this Madonna della Pieta?”

“It is Guido’s own!” I said, with all the enthusiasm of my nature, for I had been poring intently over its surpassing loveliness. “It is Guido’s own!—how *could* you have obtained it?—she is undoubtedly in painting what the Venus is in sculpture.”

“Ha!” said he thoughtfully, “the Venus—the beautiful Venus?—the Venus of

the Medici?—she of the diminutive head and the gilded hair? Part of the left arm

(here his voice dropped so as to be heard with difficulty,) and all the right, are restorations; and in the coquetry of that right arm lies, I think, the quintessence

of all affectation. Give *me* the Canova! The Apollo, too, is a copy—there can be

no doubt of it—blind fool that I am, who cannot behold the boasted inspiration of the Apollo! I cannot help—pity me!—I cannot help preferring the Antinous.

Was it not Socrates who said that the statuary found his statue in the block of marble? Then Michael Angelo was by no means original in his couplet—

'Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto

Che un marmo solo in se non circunscriva.'"

It has been, or should be remarked, that, in the manner of the true gentleman,

we are always aware of a difference from the bearing of the vulgar, without being at once precisely able to determine in what such difference consists.

Allowing the remark to have applied in its full force to the outward demeanor of

my acquaintance, I felt it, on that eventful morning, still more fully applicable to

his moral temperament and character. Nor can I better define that peculiarity of

spirit which seemed to place him so essentially apart from all other human beings, than by calling it a *habit* of intense and continual thought, pervading even his most trivial actions—intruding upon his moments of dalliance—and

interweaving itself with his very flashes of merriment—like adders which writhe

from out the eyes of the grinning masks in the cornices around the temples of Persepolis.

I could not help, however, repeatedly observing, through the mingled tone of

levity and solemnity with which he rapidly descanted upon matters of little importance, a certain air of trepidation—a degree of nervous

unction in action and in speech—an unquiet excitability of manner which appeared to me at all times unaccountable, and upon some occasions even filled me with alarm.

Frequently, too, pausing in the middle of a sentence whose commencement he had apparently forgotten, he seemed to be listening in the deepest attention, as if

either in momentary expectation of a visiter, or to sounds which must have had

existence in his imagination alone.

It was during one of these reveries or pauses of apparent abstraction, that, in

turning over a page of the poet and scholar Politian's beautiful tragedy "The Orfeo," (the first native Italian tragedy,) which lay near me upon an ottoman, I

discovered a passage underlined in pencil. It was a passage towards the end of the third act—a passage of the most heart-stirring excitement—a passage which,

although tainted with impurity, no man shall read without a thrill of novel emotion—no woman without a sigh. The whole page was blotted with fresh

tears; and, upon the opposite interleaf, were the following English lines, written

in a hand so very different from the peculiar characters of my acquaintance, that

I had some difficulty in recognising it as his own:—

Thou wast that all to me, love,

For which my soul did pine—

A green isle in the sea, love,

A fountain and a shrine,

All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers;

And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last!

Ah, starry Hope, that didst arise

But to be overcast!

A voice from out the Future cries,

“Onward!”—but o’er the Past

(Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies,

Mute—motionless—aghast!

For alas! alas! with me

The light of life is o’er.

“No more—no more—no more,”

(Such language holds the solemn sea

To the sands upon the shore,)

Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,

Or the stricken eagle soar!

Now all my hours are trances;

And all my nightly dreams

Are where the dark eye glances,

And where thy footstep gleams,

In what ethereal dances,

By what Italian streams.

Alas! for that accursed time

They bore thee o’er the billow,

From Love to titled age and crime,

And an unholy pillow!—

From me, and from our misty clime,

Where weeps the silver willow!

That these lines were written in English—a language with which I had not

believed their author acquainted—afforded me little matter for surprise. I was too well aware of the extent of his acquirements, and of the singular pleasure he

took in concealing them from observation, to be astonished at any similar

discovery; but the place of date, I must confess, occasioned me no little amazement. It had been originally written *London*, and afterwards carefully overscored—not, however, so effectually as to conceal the word from a

scrutinizing eye. I say, this occasioned me no little amazement; for I well remember that, in a former conversation with a friend, I particularly inquired if

he had at any time met in London the Marchesa di Mentoni, (who for some years

previous to her marriage had resided in that city,) when his answer, if I mistake

not, gave me to understand that he had never visited the metropolis of Great Britain. I might as well here mention, that I have more than once heard, (without,

of course, giving credit to a report involving so many improbabilities,) that the

person of whom I speak, was not only by birth, but in education, an *Englishman*.

“There is one painting,” said he, without being aware of my notice of

the tragedy—“there is still one painting which you have not seen.” And

throwing aside a drapery, he discovered a full-length portrait of the

Marchesa Aphrodite.

Human art could have done no more in the delineation of her

superhuman beauty. The same ethereal figure which stood before me the

preceding night upon the steps of the Ducal Palace, stood before me once

again. But in the expression of the countenance, which was beaming all over with smiles, there still lurked (incomprehensible anomaly!) that

fitful stain of melancholy which will ever be found inseparable from the

perfection of the beautiful. Her right arm lay folded over her bosom.

With her left she pointed downward to a curiously fashioned vase.

One small, fairy foot, alone visible, barely touched the earth; and,

scarcely discernible in the brilliant atmosphere which seemed to

encircle and enshrine her loveliness, floated a pair of the most

delicately imagined wings. My glance fell from the painting to the

figure of my friend, and the vigorous words of Chapman's *Bussy*

D'Ambois, quivered instinctively upon my lips:

"He is up

There like a Roman statue! He will stand

Till Death hath made him marble!"

"Come," he said at length, turning towards a table of richly enamelled and massive silver, upon which were a few goblets fantastically stained, together with two large Etruscan vases, fashioned in the same extraordinary model as that

in the foreground of the portrait, and filled with what I supposed to be Johannisberger. "Come," he said, abruptly, "let us drink! It is early—but let us drink. It is *indeed* early," he continued, musingly, as a cherub with a heavy golden hammer made the apartment ring with the first hour after sunrise: "It is

indeed early—but what matters it? let us drink! Let us pour out an offering to yon solemn sun which these gaudy lamps and censers are so eager to subdue!”

And, having made me pledge him in a bumper, he swallowed in rapid succession

several goblets of the wine.

“To dream,” he continued, resuming the tone of his desultory conversation, as

he held up to the rich light of a censer one of the magnificent vases —“to dream

has been the business of my life. I have therefore framed for myself, as you see,

a bower of dreams. In the heart of Venice could I have erected a better? You behold around you, it is true, a medley of architectural embellishments. The chastity of Ionia is offended by antediluvian devices, and the sphynxes of Egypt

are outstretched upon carpets of gold. Yet the effect is incongruous to the timid

alone. Proprieties of place, and especially of time, are the bugbears which terrify

mankind from the contemplation of the magnificent. Once I was myself a

decorist; but that sublimation of folly has palled upon my soul. All this is now

the fitter for my purpose. Like these arabesque censers, my spirit is writhing in

fire, and the delirium of this scene is fashioning me for the wilder visions of that

land of real dreams whither I am now rapidly departing.” He here paused

abruptly, bent his head to his bosom, and seemed to listen to a sound which I could not hear. At length, erecting his frame, he looked upwards, and ejaculated

the lines of the Bishop of Chichester:

“Stay for me there! I will not fail To meet thee in that hollow vale.”

In the next instant, confessing the power of the wine, he threw himself at full-

length upon an ottoman.

A quick step was now heard upon the staircase, and a loud knock at the door

rapidly succeeded. I was hastening to anticipate a second disturbance, when a page of Mentoni’s household burst into the room, and faltered out, in a voice choking with emotion, the incoherent words, “My mistress!—my mistress!—

Poisoned!—poisoned! Oh, beautiful—oh, beautiful Aphrodite!”

Bewildered, I flew to the ottoman, and endeavored to arouse the sleeper to a

sense of the startling intelligence. But his limbs were rigid—his lips were livid—

his lately beaming eyes were riveted in *death*. I staggered back towards the table

—my hand fell upon a cracked and blackened goblet—and a consciousness of

the entire and terrible truth flashed suddenly over my soul.

THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM

Impia tortorum longos hic turba furores

Sanguinis innocui, non satiata, aluit.

Sospite nunc patria, fracto nunc funeris antro,

Mors ubi dira fuit vita salusque patent.

[*Quatrain composed for the gates of a market to be erected*

upon the site of the Jacobin Club House at Paris.]

I WAS sick—sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me.

The sentence—the dread sentence of death—was the last of distinct accentuation

which reached my ears. After that, the sound of the inquisitorial voices seemed

merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of revolution—perhaps from its association in fancy with the burr of a mill wheel.

This only for a brief period; for presently I heard no more. Yet, for a while, I saw; but with how terrible an exaggeration! I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. They appeared to me white—whiter than the sheet upon which I trace these words—and thin even to grotesqueness; thin with the intensity of their expression of firmness—of immoveable resolution—of stern contempt of human

torture. I saw that the decrees of what to me was Fate, were still issuing from those lips. I saw them writhe with a deadly locution. I saw them fashion the syllables of my name; and I shuddered because no sound succeeded. I saw, too,

for a few moments of delirious horror, the soft and nearly imperceptible waving

of the sable draperies which enwrapped the walls of the apartment. And then my

vision fell upon the seven tall candles upon the table. At first they wore the aspect of charity, and seemed white and slender angels who would save me; but

then, all at once, there came a most deadly nausea over my spirit, and I felt every

fibre in my frame thrill as if I had touched the wire of a galvanic battery, while

the angel forms became meaningless spectres, with heads of flame, and I saw that from them there would be no help. And then there stole into my fancy, like a

rich musical note, the thought of what sweet rest there must be in the grave. The

thought came gently and stealthily, and it seemed long before it attained full appreciation; but just as my spirit came at length properly to feel and entertain it, the figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me; the tall candles sank into nothingness; their flames went out utterly; the blackness of darkness supervened; all sensations appeared swallowed up in a mad rushing

descent as of the soul into Hades. Then silence, and stillness, night were the

universe.

I had swooned; but still will not say that all of consciousness was lost. What

of it there remained I will not attempt to define, or even to describe; yet all was

not lost. In the deepest slumber—no! In delirium—no! In a swoon—no! In death

—no! even in the grave all is not lost. Else there is no immortality for man.

Arousing from the most profound of slumbers, we break the gossamer web of some dream. Yet in a second afterward, (so frail may that web have been) we remember not that we have dreamed. In the return to life from the swoon there

are two stages; first, that of the sense of mental or spiritual; secondly, that of the sense of physical, existence. It seems probable that if, upon reaching the second

stage, we could recall the impressions of the first, we should find these impressions eloquent in memories of the gulf beyond. And that gulf is —what?

How at least shall we distinguish its shadows from those of the tomb? But if the

impressions of what I have termed the first stage, are not, at will, recalled, yet,

after long interval, do they not come unbidden, while we marvel whence they come? He who has never swooned, is not he who finds strange palaces and

wildly familiar faces in coals that glow; is not he who beholds floating in mid-air

the sad visions that the many may not view; is not he who ponders over the perfume of some novel flower—is not he whose brain grows bewildered with the

meaning of some musical cadence which has never before arrested his attention.

Amid frequent and thoughtful endeavors to remember; amid earnest struggles

to regather some token of the state of seeming nothingness into which my soul

had lapsed, there have been moments when I have dreamed of success; there have been brief, very brief periods when I have conjured up remembrances

which the lucid reason of a later epoch assures me could have had reference only

to that condition of seeming unconsciousness. These shadows of memory tell, indistinctly, of tall figures that lifted and bore me in silence down—down—still

down—till a hideous dizziness oppressed me at the mere idea of the

interminableness of the descent. They tell also of a vague horror at my heart, on

account of that heart's unnatural stillness. Then comes a sense of sudden

motionlessness throughout all things; as if those who bore me (a ghastly train!)

had outrun, in their descent, the limits of the limitless, and paused from the wearisomeness of their toil. After this I call to mind flatness and dampness; and

then all is madness—the madness of a memory which busies itself

among

forbidden things.

Very suddenly there came back to my soul motion and sound—the tumultuous

motion of the heart, and, in my ears, the sound of its beating. Then a pause in which all is blank. Then again sound, and motion, and touch —a tingling

sensation pervading my frame. Then the mere consciousness of existence, without thought—a condition which lasted long. Then, very suddenly, thought, and shuddering terror, and earnest endeavor to comprehend my true state. Then a

strong desire to lapse into insensibility. Then a rushing revival of soul and a successful effort to move. And now a full memory of the trial, of the judges, of

the sable draperies, of the sentence, of the sickness, of the swoon. Then entire forgetfulness of all that followed; of all that a later day and much earnestness of

endeavor have enabled me vaguely to recall.

So far, I had not opened my eyes. I felt that I lay upon my back, unbound. I

reached out my hand, and it fell heavily upon something damp and hard. There I

suffered it to remain for many minutes, while I strove to imagine where and what

I could be. I longed, yet dared not to employ my vision. I dreaded the first glance

at objects around me. It was not that I feared to look upon things horrible, but that I grew aghast lest there should be nothing to see. At length, with a wild desperation at heart, I quickly unclosed my eyes. My worst thoughts, then, were

confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for

breath. The intensity of the darkness seemed to oppress and stifle me.

The atmosphere was intolerably close. I still lay quietly, and made effort to exercise

my reason. I brought to mind the inquisitorial proceedings, and attempted from

that point to deduce my real condition. The sentence had passed; and it appeared

to me that a very long interval of time had since elapsed. Yet not for a moment

did I suppose myself actually dead. Such a supposition, notwithstanding what we

read in fiction, is altogether inconsistent with real existence;—but where and in

what state was I? The condemned to death, I knew, perished usually at the autos-

da-fe, and one of these had been held on the very night of the day of my trial.

Had I been remanded to my dungeon, to await the next sacrifice, which would not take place for many months? This I at once saw could not be. Victims had been in immediate demand. Moreover, my dungeon, as well as all the

condemned cells at Toledo, had stone floors, and light was not altogether

excluded.

A fearful idea now suddenly drove the blood in torrents upon my heart, and for a brief period, I once more relapsed into insensibility. Upon recovering, I at

once started to my feet, trembling convulsively in every fibre. I thrust my arms

wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing; yet dreaded to move

a step, lest I should be impeded by the walls of a tomb. Perspiration burst from

every pore, and stood in cold big beads upon my forehead. The agony of

suspense grew at length intolerable, and I cautiously moved forward, with my arms extended, and my eyes straining from their sockets, in the hope of catching

some faint ray of light. I proceeded for many paces; but still all was blackness and vacancy. I breathed more freely. It seemed evident that mine was not, at least, the most hideous of fates.

And now, as I still continued to step cautiously onward, there came thronging

upon my recollection a thousand vague rumors of the horrors of Toledo. Of the

dungeons there had been strange things narrated—fables I had always deemed

them—but yet strange, and too ghastly to repeat, save in a whisper. Was I left to

perish of starvation in this subterranean world of darkness; or what fate, perhaps

even more fearful, awaited me? That the result would be death, and a death of more than customary bitterness, I knew too well the character of my judges to doubt. The mode and the hour were all that occupied or distracted me.

My outstretched hands at length encountered some solid obstruction. It was a

wall, seemingly of stone masonry—very smooth, slimy, and cold. I followed it up; stepping with all the careful distrust with which certain antique narratives had inspired me. This process, however, afforded me no means of ascertaining the dimensions of my dungeon; as I might make its circuit, and return to the point whence I set out, without being aware of the fact; so perfectly uniform seemed the wall. I therefore sought the knife which had been in my pocket, when

led into the inquisitorial chamber; but it was gone; my clothes had been

exchanged for a wrapper of coarse serge. I had thought of forcing the

blade in some minute crevice of the masonry, so as to identify my point of departure. The

difficulty, nevertheless, was but trivial; although, in the disorder of my fancy, it

seemed at first insuperable. I tore a part of the hem from the robe and placed the

fragment at full length, and at right angles to the wall. In groping my way around

the prison, I could not fail to encounter this rag upon completing the circuit. So,

at least I thought: but I had not counted upon the extent of the dungeon, or upon

my own weakness. The ground was moist and slippery. I staggered onward for

some time, when I stumbled and fell. My excessive fatigue induced me to

remain prostrate; and sleep soon overtook me as I lay.

Upon awaking, and stretching forth an arm, I found beside me a loaf and a pitcher with water. I was too much exhausted to reflect upon this circumstance,

but ate and drank with avidity. Shortly afterward, I resumed my tour around the

prison, and with much toil came at last upon the fragment of the serge. Up to the

period when I fell I had counted fifty-two paces, and upon resuming my walk, I

had counted forty-eight more;—when I arrived at the rag. There were in all, then, a hundred paces; and, admitting two paces to the yard, I presumed the dungeon to be fifty yards in circuit. I had met, however, with many angles in the

wall, and thus I could form no guess at the shape of the vault; for vault I could

not help supposing it to be.

I had little object—certainly no hope—in these researches; but a vague

curiosity prompted me to continue them. Quitting the wall, I resolved to cross the area of the enclosure. At first I proceeded with extreme caution, for the floor,

although seemingly of solid material, was treacherous with slime. At length, however, I took courage, and did not hesitate to step firmly; endeavoring to cross

in as direct a line as possible. I had advanced some ten or twelve paces in this

manner, when the remnant of the torn hem of my robe became entangled

between my legs. I stepped on it, and fell violently on my face.

In the confusion attending my fall, I did not immediately apprehend a

somewhat startling circumstance, which yet, in a few seconds afterward, and while I still lay prostrate, arrested my attention. It was this—my chin rested upon

the floor of the prison, but my lips and the upper portion of my head, although

seemingly at a less elevation than the chin, touched nothing. At the same time my forehead seemed bathed in a clammy vapor, and the peculiar smell of

decayed fungus arose to my nostrils. I put forward my arm, and shuddered to find that I had fallen at the very brink of a circular pit, whose extent, of course, I had no means of ascertaining at the moment. Groping about the masonry just below the margin, I succeeded in dislodging a small fragment, and let it fall into

the abyss. For many seconds I hearkened to its reverberations as it dashed against the sides of the chasm in its descent; at length there was a sullen plunge

into water, succeeded by loud echoes. At the same moment there came a sound

resembling the quick opening, and as rapid closing of a door overhead, while a

faint gleam of light flashed suddenly through the gloom, and as suddenly faded

away.

I saw clearly the doom which had been prepared for me, and congratulated

myself upon the timely accident by which I had escaped. Another step before my

fall, and the world had seen me no more. And the death just avoided, was of that

very character which I had regarded as fabulous and frivolous in the tales respecting the Inquisition. To the victims of its tyranny, there was the choice of

death with its direst physical agonies, or death with its most hideous moral horrors. I had been reserved for the latter. By long suffering my nerves had been

unstrung, until I trembled at the sound of my own voice, and had become in every respect a fitting subject for the species of torture which awaited me.

Shaking in every limb, I groped my way back to the wall; resolving there to

perish rather than risk the terrors of the wells, of which my imagination now pictured many in various positions about the dungeon. In other conditions of mind I might have had courage to end my misery at once by a plunge into one of

these abysses; but now I was the veriest of cowards. Neither could I forget what I had read of these pits—that the sudden extinction of life formed no part of their

most horrible plan.

Agitation of spirit kept me awake for many long hours; but at length I again

slumbered. Upon arousing, I found by my side, as before, a loaf and a

pitcher of

water. A burning thirst consumed me, and I emptied the vessel at a draught. It must have been drugged; for scarcely had I drunk, before I became irresistibly drowsy. A deep sleep fell upon me—a sleep like that of death. How long it lasted

of course, I know not; but when, once again, I unclosed my eyes, the objects around me were visible. By a wild sulphurous lustre, the origin of which I could

not at first determine, I was enabled to see the extent and aspect of the prison.

In its size I had been greatly mistaken. The whole circuit of its walls did not

exceed twenty-five yards. For some minutes this fact occasioned me a world of

vain trouble; vain indeed! for what could be of less importance, under the terrible circumstances which environed me, then the mere dimensions of my

dungeon? But my soul took a wild interest in trifles, and I busied myself in endeavors to account for the error I had committed in my measurement. The truth at length flashed upon me. In my first attempt at exploration I had counted

fifty-two paces, up to the period when I fell; I must then have been within a pace

or two of the fragment of serge; in fact, I had nearly performed the circuit of the

vault. I then slept, and upon awaking, I must have returned upon my steps—thus

supposing the circuit nearly double what it actually was. My confusion of mind

prevented me from observing that I began my tour with the wall to the left, and

ended it with the wall to the right.

I had been deceived, too, in respect to the shape of the enclosure. In

feeling my way I had found many angles, and thus deduced an idea of great irregularity;

so potent is the effect of total darkness upon one arousing from lethargy or sleep!

The angles were simply those of a few slight depressions, or niches, at odd intervals. The general shape of the prison was square. What I had taken for masonry seemed now to be iron, or some other metal, in huge plates, whose sutures or joints occasioned the depression. The entire surface of this metallic enclosure was rudely daubed in all the hideous and repulsive devices to which the charnel superstition of the monks has given rise. The figures of fiends in aspects of menace, with skeleton forms, and other more really fearful images, overspread and disfigured the walls. I observed that the outlines of these monstrosities were sufficiently distinct, but that the colors seemed faded and blurred, as if from the effects of a damp atmosphere. I now noticed the floor, too,

which was of stone. In the centre yawned the circular pit from whose jaws I had

escaped; but it was the only one in the dungeon.

All this I saw indistinctly and by much effort: for my personal condition had

been greatly changed during slumber. I now lay upon my back, and at full length, on a species of low framework of wood. To this I was securely bound by

a long strap resembling a surcingle. It passed in many convolutions about my limbs and body, leaving at liberty only my head, and my left arm to such extent

that I could, by dint of much exertion, supply myself with food from an earthen

dish which lay by my side on the floor. I saw, to my horror, that the pitcher had

been removed. I say to my horror; for I was consumed with intolerable thirst.

This thirst it appeared to be the design of my persecutors to stimulate: for the food in the dish was meat pungently seasoned.

Looking upward, I surveyed the ceiling of my prison. It was some thirty or forty feet overhead, and constructed much as the side walls. In one of its panels a

very singular figure riveted my whole attention. It was the painted figure of Time

as he is commonly represented, save that, in lieu of a scythe, he held what, at a

casual glance, I supposed to be the pictured image of a huge pendulum such as

we see on antique clocks. There was something, however, in the appearance of

this machine which caused me to regard it more attentively. While I gazed directly upward at it (for its position was immediately over my own) I fancied that I saw it in motion. In an instant afterward the fancy was confirmed. Its sweep was brief, and of course slow. I watched it for some minutes, somewhat in

fear, but more in wonder. Wearied at length with observing its dull movement, I

turned my eyes upon the other objects in the cell.

A slight noise attracted my notice, and, looking to the floor, I saw several enormous rats traversing it. They had issued from the well, which lay just within

view to my right. Even then, while I gazed, they came up in troops, hurriedly, with ravenous eyes, allured by the scent of the meat. From this it required much

effort and attention to scare them away.

It might have been half an hour, perhaps even an hour, (for I could take but imperfect note of time) before I again cast my eyes upward. What I then saw confounded and amazed me. The sweep of the pendulum had increased in extent

by nearly a yard. As a natural consequence, its velocity was also much greater.

But what mainly disturbed me was the idea that had perceptibly

descended. I now observed—with what horror it is needless to say—that its nether extremity

was formed of a crescent of glittering steel, about a foot in length from horn to

horn; the horns upward, and the under edge evidently as keen as that of a razor.

Like a razor also, it seemed massy and heavy, tapering from the edge into a solid

and broad structure above. It was appended to a weighty rod of brass, and the

whole hissed as it swung through the air.

I could no longer doubt the doom prepared for me by monkish ingenuity in torture. My cognizance of the pit had become known to the inquisitorial agents

—the pit whose horrors had been destined for so bold a recusant as myself—the

pit, typical of hell, and regarded by rumor as the Ultima Thule of all their punishments. The plunge into this pit I had avoided by the merest of accidents, I

knew that surprise, or entrapment into torment, formed an important portion of

all the grotesquerie of these dungeon deaths. Having failed to fall, it was no part

of the demon plan to hurl me into the abyss; and thus (there being no alternative)

a different and a milder destruction awaited me. Milder! I half smiled in my agony as I thought of such application of such a term.

What boots it to tell of the long, long hours of horror more than mortal, during

which I counted the rushing vibrations of the steel! Inch by inch—line by line—

with a descent only appreciable at intervals that seemed ages—down

and still down it came! Days passed—it might have been that many days passed—ere it

swept so closely over me as to fan me with its acrid breath. The odor of the sharp

steel forced itself into my nostrils. I prayed—I wearied heaven with my prayer for its more speedy descent. I grew frantically mad, and struggled to force myself upward against the sweep of the fearful scimitar. And then I fell suddenly

calm, and lay smiling at the glittering death, as a child at some rare bauble.

There was another interval of utter insensibility; it was brief; for, upon again

lapsing into life there had been no perceptible descent in the pendulum. But it might have been long; for I knew there were demons who took note of my

swoon, and who could have arrested the vibration at pleasure. Upon my

recovery, too, I felt very—oh, inexpressibly sick and weak, as if through long inanition. Even amid the agonies of that period, the human nature craved food.

With painful effort I outstretched my left arm as far as my bonds permitted, and

took possession of the small remnant which had been spared me by the rats. As I

put a portion of it within my lips, there rushed to my mind a half formed thought

of joy—of hope. Yet what business had I with hope? It was, as I say, a half formed thought—man has many such which are never completed. I felt that it was of joy—of hope; but felt also that it had perished in its formation. In vain I

struggled to perfect—to regain it. Long suffering had nearly annihilated all my

ordinary powers of mind. I was an imbecile—an idiot.

The vibration of the pendulum was at right angles to my length. I saw that the

crescent was designed to cross the region of the heart. It would fray the serge of

my robe—it would return and repeat its operations—again—and again.

Notwithstanding terrifically wide sweep (some thirty feet or more) and the

hissing vigor of its descent, sufficient to sunder these very walls of iron, still the fraying of my robe would be all that, for several minutes, it would accomplish.

And at this thought I paused. I dared not go farther than this reflection. I dwelt

upon it with a pertinacity of attention—as if, in so dwelling, I could arrest here

the descent of the steel. I forced myself to ponder upon the sound of the crescent

as it should pass across the garment—upon the peculiar thrilling sensation which

the friction of cloth produces on the nerves. I pondered upon all this frivolity until my teeth were on edge.

Down—steadily down it crept. I took a frenzied pleasure in contrasting its downward with its lateral velocity. To the right—to the left—far and wide—with

the shriek of a damned spirit; to my heart with the stealthy pace of the tiger! I alternately laughed and howled as the one or the other idea grew predominant.

Down—certainly, relentlessly down! It vibrated within three inches of my

bosom! I struggled violently, furiously, to free my left arm. This was free only from the elbow to the hand. I could reach the latter, from the platter beside me,

to my mouth, with great effort, but no farther. Could I have broken

the fastenings

above the elbow, I would have seized and attempted to arrest the pendulum. I might as well have attempted to arrest an avalanche!

Down—still unceasingly—still inevitably down! I gasped and struggled at

each vibration. I shrunk convulsively at its every sweep. My eyes followed its outward or upward whirls with the eagerness of the most unmeaning despair; they closed themselves spasmodically at the descent, although death would have

been a relief, oh! how unspeakable! Still I quivered in every nerve to think how

slight a sinking of the machinery would precipitate that keen, glistening axe upon my bosom. It was hope that prompted the nerve to quiver—the frame to shrink. It was hope—the hope that triumphs on the rack—that whispers to the death-condemned even in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

I saw that some ten or twelve vibrations would bring the steel in actual contact

with my robe, and with this observation there suddenly came over my spirit all

the keen, collected calmness of despair. For the first time during many hours—or

perhaps days—I thought. It now occurred to me that the bandage, or surcingle,

which enveloped me, was unique. I was tied by no separate cord. The first stroke

of the razorlike crescent athwart any portion of the band, would so detach it that

it might be unwound from my person by means of my left hand. But how fearful,

in that case, the proximity of the steel! The result of the slightest struggle how

deadly! Was it likely, moreover, that the minions of the torturer had

not foreseen

and provided for this possibility! Was it probable that the bandage crossed my bosom in the track of the pendulum? Dreading to find my faint, and, as it

seemed, my last hope frustrated, I so far elevated my head as to obtain a distinct view of my breast. The surcingle enveloped my limbs and body close in all directions—save in the path of the destroying crescent.

Scarcely had I dropped my head back into its original position, when there flashed upon my mind what I cannot better describe than as the unformed half of

that idea of deliverance to which I have previously alluded, and of which a moiety only floated indeterminately through my brain when I raised food to my

burning lips. The whole thought was now present—feeble, scarcely sane,

scarcely definite,—but still entire. I proceeded at once, with the nervous energy

of despair, to attempt its execution.

For many hours the immediate vicinity of the low framework upon which I

lay, had been literally swarming with rats. They were wild, bold, ravenous; their

red eyes glaring upon me as if they waited but for motionlessness on my part to

make me their prey. “To what food,” I thought, “have they been accustomed in

the well?”

They had devoured, in spite of all my efforts to prevent them, all but a small

remnant of the contents of the dish. I had fallen into an habitual see-saw, or wave

of the hand about the platter: and, at length, the unconscious uniformity of the movement deprived it of effect. In their voracity the vermin frequently fastened

their sharp fangs in my fingers. With the particles of the oily and spicy viand which now remained, I thoroughly rubbed the bandage wherever I could reach it;

then, raising my hand from the floor, I lay breathlessly still.

At first the ravenous animals were startled and terrified at the change —at the

cessation of movement. They shrank alarmedly back; many sought the well. But

this was only for a moment. I had not counted in vain upon their voracity.

Observing that I remained without motion, one or two of the boldest leaped upon

the frame-work, and smelt at the surcingle. This seemed the signal for a general

rush. Forth from the well they hurried in fresh troops. They clung to the wood—

they overran it, and leaped in hundreds upon my person. The measured

movement of the pendulum disturbed them not at all. Avoiding its strokes they

busied themselves with the anointed bandage. They pressed—they swarmed

upon me in ever accumulating heaps. They writhed upon my throat; their cold lips sought my own; I was half stifled by their thronging pressure; disgust, for which the world has no name, swelled my bosom, and chilled, with a heavy clamminess, my heart. Yet one minute, and I felt that the struggle would be over.

Plainly I perceived the loosening of the bandage. I knew that in more than one

place it must be already severed. With a more than human resolution I

lay still.

Nor had I erred in my calculations—nor had I endured in vain. I at length felt

that I was free. The surcingle hung in ribands from my body. But the stroke of the pendulum already pressed upon my bosom. It had divided the serge of the robe. It had cut through the linen beneath. Twice again it swung, and a sharp sense of pain shot through every nerve. But the moment of escape had arrived.

At a wave of my hand my deliverers hurried tumultuously away. With a steady

movement—cautious, sidelong, shrinking, and slow—I slid from the embrace of

the bandage and beyond the reach of the scimitar. For the moment, at least, I was

free.

Free!—and in the grasp of the Inquisition! I had scarcely stepped from my wooden bed of horror upon the stone floor of the prison, when the motion of the

hellish machine ceased and I beheld it drawn up, by some invisible force, through the ceiling. This was a lesson which I took desperately to heart. My every motion was undoubtedly watched. Free!—I had but escaped death in one

form of agony, to be delivered unto worse than death in some other. With that thought I rolled my eves nervously around on the barriers of iron that hemmed

me in. Something unusual—some change which, at first, I could not appreciate

distinctly—it was obvious, had taken place in the apartment. For many minutes

of a dreamy and trembling abstraction, I busied myself in vain, unconnected conjecture. During this period, I became aware, for the first time, of the origin of

the sulphurous light which illumined the cell. It proceeded from a

fissure, about

half an inch in width, extending entirely around the prison at the base of the walls, which thus appeared, and were, completely separated from the floor. I endeavored, but of course in vain, to look through the aperture.

As I arose from the attempt, the mystery of the alteration in the chamber broke

at once upon my understanding. I have observed that, although the outlines of the figures upon the walls were sufficiently distinct, yet the colors seemed blurred and indefinite. These colors had now assumed, and were momentarily

assuming, a startling and most intense brilliancy, that gave to the spectral and fiendish portraitures an aspect that might have thrilled even firmer nerves than my own. Demon eyes, of a wild and ghastly vivacity, glared upon me in a thousand directions, where none had been visible before, and gleamed with the

lurid lustre of a fire that I could not force my imagination to regard as unreal.

Unreal!—Even while I breathed there came to my nostrils the breath of the vapour of heated iron! A suffocating odour pervaded the prison! A deeper glow

settled each moment in the eyes that glared at my agonies! A richer tint of crimson diffused itself over the pictured horrors of blood. I panted! I gasped for

breath! There could be no doubt of the design of my tormentors—oh! most

unrelenting! oh! most demoniac of men! I shrank from the glowing metal to the

centre of the cell. Amid the thought of the fiery destruction that impended, the idea of the coolness of the well came over my soul like balm. I rushed to its deadly brink. I threw my straining vision below. The glare from the enkindled roof illumined its inmost recesses. Yet, for a wild moment, did my spirit refuse

to comprehend the meaning of what I saw. At length it forced—it wrestled its way into my soul—it burned itself in upon my shuddering

reason.—Oh! for a voice to speak!—oh! horror!—oh! any horror but this! With a shriek, I rushed from the margin, and buried my face in my hands—weeping bitterly.

The heat rapidly increased, and once again I looked up, shuddering as with a

fit of the ague. There had been a second change in the cell—and now the change

was obviously in the form. As before, it was in vain that I, at first, endeavoured

to appreciate or understand what was taking place. But not long was I left in doubt. The Inquisitorial vengeance had been hurried by my two-fold escape, and

there was to be no more dallying with the King of Terrors. The room had been

square. I saw that two of its iron angles were now acute—two, consequently, obtuse. The fearful difference quickly increased with a low rumbling or moaning

sound. In an instant the apartment had shifted its form into that of a lozenge. But

the alteration stopped not here-I neither hoped nor desired it to stop. I could have

clasped the red walls to my bosom as a garment of eternal peace. “Death,” I said,

“any death but that of the pit!” Fool! might I have not known that into the pit it

was the object of the burning iron to urge me? Could I resist its glow? or, if even

that, could I withstand its pressure? And now, flatter and flatter grew the lozenge, with a rapidity that left me no time for contemplation. Its centre, and of

course, its greatest width, came just over the yawning gulf. I shrank back—but

the closing walls pressed me resistlessly onward. At length for my

seared and writhing body there was no longer an inch of foothold on the firm floor of the prison. I struggled no more, but the agony of my soul found vent in one loud, long, and final scream of despair. I felt that I tottered upon the brink—I averted

my eyes—

There was a discordant hum of human voices! There was a loud blast as of many trumpets! There was a harsh grating as of a thousand thunders! The fiery

walls rushed back! An outstretched arm caught my own as I fell, fainting, into the abyss. It was that of General Lasalle. The French army had entered Toledo.

The Inquisition was in the hands of its enemies.

THE PREMATURE BURIAL

THERE are certain themes of which the interest is all-absorbing, but which are too entirely horrible for the purposes of legitimate fiction. These the mere romanticist must eschew, if he do not wish to offend or to disgust. They are with

propriety handled only when the severity and majesty of Truth sanctify and sustain them. We thrill, for example, with the most intense of “pleasurable pain”

over the accounts of the Passage of the Beresina, of the Earthquake at Lisbon, of

the Plague at London, of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, or of the stifling of

the hundred and twenty-three prisoners in the Black Hole at Calcutta. But in these accounts it is the fact——it is the reality——it is the history which excites.

As inventions, we should regard them with simple abhorrence.

I have mentioned some few of the more prominent and august calamities on

record; but in these it is the extent, not less than the character of the calamity, which so vividly impresses the fancy. I need not remind the reader that, from the

long and weird catalogue of human miseries, I might have selected many

individual instances more replete with essential suffering than any of these vast

generalities of disaster. The true wretchedness, indeed—the ultimate woe——is

particular, not diffuse. That the ghastly extremes of agony are endured by man the unit, and never by man the mass——for this let us thank a merciful God!

To be buried while alive is, beyond question, the most terrific of these

extremes which has ever fallen to the lot of mere mortality. That it has frequently, very frequently, so fallen will scarcely be denied by those who think.

The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague.

Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins? We know that there are diseases in which occur total cessations of all the apparent functions of

vitality, and yet in which these cessations are merely suspensions, properly so called. They are only temporary pauses in the incomprehensible mechanism. A

certain period elapses, and some unseen mysterious principle again sets in

motion the magic pinions and the wizard wheels. The silver cord was not for ever loosed, nor the golden bowl irreparably broken. But where, meantime, was

the soul?

Apart, however, from the inevitable conclusion, a priori that such causes must

produce such effects——that the well-known occurrence of such cases of

suspended animation must naturally give rise, now and then, to premature

interments—apart from this consideration, we have the direct testimony of medical and ordinary experience to prove that a vast number of such interments

have actually taken place. I might refer at once, if necessary to a hundred well authenticated instances. One of very remarkable character, and of which the circumstances may be fresh in the memory of some of my readers, occurred, not

very long ago, in the neighboring city of Baltimore, where it occasioned a painful, intense, and widely-extended excitement. The wife of one of the most respectable citizens—a lawyer of eminence and a member of Congress—was

seized with a sudden and unaccountable illness, which completely baffled the skill of her physicians. After much suffering she died, or was supposed to die.

No one suspected, indeed, or had reason to suspect, that she was not actually dead. She presented all the ordinary appearances of death. The face assumed the

usual pinched and sunken outline. The lips were of the usual marble pallor. The

eyes were lustreless. There was no warmth. Pulsation had ceased. For three days

the body was preserved unburied, during which it had acquired a stony rigidity.

The funeral, in short, was hastened, on account of the rapid advance of what was

supposed to be decomposition.

The lady was deposited in her family vault, which, for three subsequent years,

was undisturbed. At the expiration of this term it was opened for the reception of

a sarcophagus;——but, alas! how fearful a shock awaited the husband, who,

personally, threw open the door! As its portals swung outwardly back,

some white-apparelled object fell rattling within his arms. It was the skeleton of his wife in her yet unmoulded shroud.

A careful investigation rendered it evident that she had revived within two days after her entombment; that her struggles within the coffin had caused it to

fall from a ledge, or shelf to the floor, where it was so broken as to permit her

escape. A lamp which had been accidentally left, full of oil, within the tomb, was

found empty; it might have been exhausted, however, by evaporation. On the uttermost of the steps which led down into the dread chamber was a large fragment of the coffin, with which, it seemed, that she had endeavored to arrest

attention by striking the iron door. While thus occupied, she probably swooned,

or possibly died, through sheer terror; and, in failing, her shroud became entangled in some iron—work which projected interiorly. Thus she remained,

and thus she rotted, erect.

In the year 1810, a case of living inhumation happened in France, attended with circumstances which go far to warrant the assertion that truth is, indeed, stranger than fiction. The heroine of the story was a Mademoiselle Victorine Lafourcade, a young girl of illustrious family, of wealth, and of great personal

beauty. Among her numerous suitors was Julien Bossuet, a poor litterateur, or journalist of Paris. His talents and general amiability had recommended him to

the notice of the heiress, by whom he seems to have been truly beloved; but her

pride of birth decided her, finally, to reject him, and to wed a Monsieur Renelle,

a banker and a diplomatist of some eminence. After marriage, however, this gentleman neglected, and, perhaps, even more positively ill-treated her. Having

passed with him some wretched years, she died,——at least her condition so

closely resembled death as to deceive every one who saw her. She was buried

——not in a vault, but in an ordinary grave in the village of her nativity. Filled

with despair, and still inflamed by the memory of a profound attachment, the lover journeys from the capital to the remote province in which the village lies,

with the romantic purpose of disinterring the corpse, and possessing himself of

its luxuriant tresses. He reaches the grave. At midnight he unearths the coffin, opens it, and is in the act of detaching the hair, when he is arrested by the unclosing of the beloved eyes. In fact, the lady had been buried alive. Vitality had not altogether departed, and she was aroused by the caresses of her lover from the lethargy which had been mistaken for death. He bore her frantically to

his lodgings in the village. He employed certain powerful restoratives suggested

by no little medical learning. In fine, she revived. She recognized her preserver.

She remained with him until, by slow degrees, she fully recovered her original health. Her woman's heart was not adamant, and this last lesson of love sufficed

to soften it. She bestowed it upon Bossuet. She returned no more to her husband,

but, concealing from him her resurrection, fled with her lover to America.

Twenty years afterward, the two returned to France, in the persuasion that time

had so greatly altered the lady's appearance that her friends would be unable to

recognize her. They were mistaken, however, for, at the first meeting,

Monsieur

Renelle did actually recognize and make claim to his wife. This claim she resisted, and a judicial tribunal sustained her in her resistance, deciding that the

peculiar circumstances, with the long lapse of years, had extinguished, not only

equitably, but legally, the authority of the husband.

The “Chirurgical Journal” of Leipsic—a periodical of high authority and

merit, which some American bookseller would do well to translate and

republish, records in a late number a very distressing event of the character in question.

An officer of artillery, a man of gigantic stature and of robust health, being thrown from an unmanageable horse, received a very severe contusion upon the

head, which rendered him insensible at once; the skull was slightly fractured, but

no immediate danger was apprehended. Trepanning was accomplished

successfully. He was bled, and many other of the ordinary means of relief were adopted. Gradually, however, he fell into a more and more hopeless state of stupor, and, finally, it was thought that he died.

The weather was warm, and he was buried with indecent haste in one of the

public cemeteries. His funeral took place on Thursday. On the Sunday following,

the grounds of the cemetery were, as usual, much thronged with visiters, and about noon an intense excitement was created by the declaration of a peasant that, while sitting upon the grave of the officer, he had distinctly felt a commotion of the earth, as if occasioned by some one struggling beneath. At first little attention was paid to the man’s asseveration; but his evident terror, and the dogged obstinacy with which he persisted in his story, had at length their natural effect upon the crowd. Spades were hurriedly procured,

and the grave, which was shamefully shallow, was in a few minutes so far thrown open that the

head of its occupant appeared. He was then seemingly dead; but he sat nearly erect within his coffin, the lid of which, in his furious struggles, he had partially uplifted.

He was forthwith conveyed to the nearest hospital, and there pronounced to be

still living, although in an asphytic condition. After some hours he revived, recognized individuals of his acquaintance, and, in broken sentences spoke of his

agonies in the grave.

From what he related, it was clear that he must have been conscious of life for

more than an hour, while inhumed, before lapsing into insensibility. The grave was carelessly and loosely filled with an exceedingly porous soil; and thus some

air was necessarily admitted. He heard the footsteps of the crowd overhead, and

endeavored to make himself heard in turn. It was the tumult within the grounds

of the cemetery, he said, which appeared to awaken him from a deep sleep, but

no sooner was he awake than he became fully aware of the awful horrors of his

position.

This patient, it is recorded, was doing well and seemed to be in a fair way of

ultimate recovery, but fell a victim to the quackeries of medical experiment. The

galvanic battery was applied, and he suddenly expired in one of those ecstatic paroxysms which, occasionally, it superinduces.

The mention of the galvanic battery, nevertheless, recalls to my

memory a

well known and very extraordinary case in point, where its action proved the means of restoring to animation a young attorney of London, who had been

interred for two days. This occurred in 1831, and created, at the time, a very profound sensation wherever it was made the subject of converse.

The patient, Mr. Edward Stapleton, had died, apparently of typhus fever, accompanied with some anomalous symptoms which had excited the curiosity of

his medical attendants. Upon his seeming decease, his friends were requested to

sanction a post-mortem examination, but declined to permit it. As often happens,

when such refusals are made, the practitioners resolved to disinter the body and

dissect it at leisure, in private. Arrangements were easily effected with some of

the numerous corps of body-snatchers, with which London abounds; and, upon

the third night after the funeral, the supposed corpse was unearthed from a grave

eight feet deep, and deposited in the opening chamber of one of the private hospitals.

An incision of some extent had been actually made in the abdomen, when the

fresh and undecayed appearance of the subject suggested an application of the battery. One experiment succeeded another, and the customary effects

supervened, with nothing to characterize them in any respect, except, upon one

or two occasions, a more than ordinary degree of life-likeness in the convulsive

action.

It grew late. The day was about to dawn; and it was thought expedient, at length, to proceed at once to the dissection. A student, however, was especially

desirous of testing a theory of his own, and insisted upon applying the battery to

one of the pectoral muscles. A rough gash was made, and a wire hastily brought

in contact, when the patient, with a hurried but quite unconvulsive movement, arose from the table, stepped into the middle of the floor, gazed about him uneasily for a few seconds, and then—spoke. What he said was unintelligible, but words were uttered; the syllabification was distinct. Having spoken, he fell

heavily to the floor.

For some moments all were paralyzed with awe—but the urgency of the case

soon restored them their presence of mind. It was seen that Mr. Stapleton was alive, although in a swoon. Upon exhibition of ether he revived and was rapidly

restored to health, and to the society of his friends—from whom, however, all knowledge of his resuscitation was withheld, until a relapse was no longer to be

apprehended. Their wonder—their rapturous astonishment—may be conceived.

The most thrilling peculiarity of this incident, nevertheless, is involved in what Mr. S. himself asserts. He declares that at no period was he altogether insensible—that, dully and confusedly, he was aware of everything which

happened to him, from the moment in which he was pronounced dead by his

physicians, to that in which he fell swooning to the floor of the hospital. “I am

alive,” were the uncomprehended words which, upon recognizing the

locality of

the dissecting-room, he had endeavored, in his extremity, to utter.

It were an easy matter to multiply such histories as these—but I forbear—for, indeed, we have no need of such to establish the fact that premature interments

occur. When we reflect how very rarely, from the nature of the case, we have it

in our power to detect them, we must admit that they may frequently occur without our cognizance. Scarcely, in truth, is a graveyard ever encroached upon,

for any purpose, to any great extent, that skeletons are not found in postures which suggest the most fearful of suspicions.

Fearful indeed the suspicion—but more fearful the doom! It may be asserted,

without hesitation, that no event is so terribly well adapted to inspire the supremeness of bodily and of mental distress, as is burial before death. The unendurable oppression of the lungs—the stifling fumes from the damp earth—

the clinging to the death garments—the rigid embrace of the narrow house—the

blackness of the absolute Night—the silence like a sea that overwhelms—the

unseen but palpable presence of the Conqueror Worm—these things, with the

thoughts of the air and grass above, with memory of dear friends who would fly

to save us if but informed of our fate, and with consciousness that of this fate they can never be informed—that our hopeless portion is that of the really dead

—these considerations, I say, carry into the heart, which still palpitates, a degree

of appalling and intolerable horror from which the most daring imagination must

recoil. We know of nothing so agonizing upon Earth—we can dream of nothing

half so hideous in the realms of the nethermost Hell. And thus all narratives upon this topic have an interest profound; an interest, nevertheless, which, through the sacred awe of the topic itself, very properly and very peculiarly depends upon our conviction of the truth of the matter narrated. What I have now to tell is of my own actual knowledge—of my own positive and personal experience.

For several years I had been subject to attacks of the singular disorder which

physicians have agreed to term catalepsy, in default of a more definitive title.

Although both the immediate and the predisposing causes, and even the actual diagnosis, of this disease are still mysterious, its obvious and apparent character

is sufficiently well understood. Its variations seem to be chiefly of degree.

Sometimes the patient lies, for a day only, or even for a shorter period, in a species of exaggerated lethargy. He is senseless and externally motionless; but the pulsation of the heart is still faintly perceptible; some traces of warmth remain; a slight color lingers within the centre of the cheek; and, upon

application of a mirror to the lips, we can detect a torpid, unequal, and vacillating action of the lungs. Then again the duration of the trance is for weeks

—even for months; while the closest scrutiny, and the most rigorous medical

tests, fail to establish any material distinction between the state of the sufferer and what we conceive of absolute death. Very usually he is saved from

premature interment solely by the knowledge of his friends that he has been previously subject to catalepsy, by the consequent suspicion excited, and, above

all, by the non-appearance of decay. The advances of the malady are, luckily, gradual. The first manifestations, although marked, are

unequivocal. The fits grow successively more and more distinctive, and endure each for a longer term

than the preceding. In this lies the principal security from inhumation. The unfortunate whose first attack should be of the extreme character which is occasionally seen, would almost inevitably be consigned alive to the tomb.

My own case differed in no important particular from those mentioned in

medical books. Sometimes, without any apparent cause, I sank, little by little, into a condition of hemi-syncope, or half swoon; and, in this condition, without

pain, without ability to stir, or, strictly speaking, to think, but with a dull lethargic consciousness of life and of the presence of those who surrounded my

bed, I remained, until the crisis of the disease restored me, suddenly, to perfect

sensation. At other times I was quickly and impetuously smitten. I grew sick, and numb, and chilly, and dizzy, and so fell prostrate at once. Then, for weeks,

all was void, and black, and silent, and Nothing became the universe. Total annihilation could be no more. From these latter attacks I awoke, however, with

a gradation slow in proportion to the suddenness of the seizure. Just as the day

dawns to the friendless and houseless beggar who roams the streets throughout

the long desolate winter night—just so tardily—just so wearily—just so cheerily

came back the light of the Soul to me.

Apart from the tendency to trance, however, my general health appeared to be

good; nor could I perceive that it was at all affected by the one prevalent malady

—unless, indeed, an idiosyncrasy in my ordinary sleep may be looked upon as superinduced. Upon awaking from slumber, I could never gain, at once,

thorough possession of my senses, and always remained, for many minutes, in much bewilderment and perplexity;—the mental faculties in general, but the

memory in especial, being in a condition of absolute abeyance.

In all that I endured there was no physical suffering but of moral distress an

infinitude. My fancy grew charnel, I talked “of worms, of tombs, and epitaphs.”

I was lost in reveries of death, and the idea of premature burial held continual possession of my brain. The ghastly Danger to which I was subjected haunted me day and night. In the former, the torture of meditation was excessive—in the

latter, supreme. When the grim Darkness overspread the Earth, then, with every

horror of thought, I shook—shook as the quivering plumes upon the hearse.

When Nature could endure wakefulness no longer, it was with a struggle that I consented to sleep—for I shuddered to reflect that, upon awaking, I might find

myself the tenant of a grave. And when, finally, I sank into slumber, it was only

to rush at once into a world of phantasms, above which, with vast, sable, overshadowing wing, hovered, predominant, the one sepulchral Idea.

From the innumerable images of gloom which thus oppressed me in dreams, I

select for record but a solitary vision. Methought I was immersed in a cataleptic

trance of more than usual duration and profundity. Suddenly there came an icy hand upon my forehead, and an impatient, gibbering

voice whispered the word

“Arise!” within my ear.

I sat erect. The darkness was total. I could not see the figure of him who had

aroused me. I could call to mind neither the period at which I had fallen into the

trance, nor the locality in which I then lay. While I remained motionless, and busied in endeavors to collect my thought, the cold hand grasped me fiercely by

the wrist, shaking it petulantly, while the gibbering voice said again:

“Arise! did I not bid thee arise?”

“And who,” I demanded, “art thou?”

“I have no name in the regions which I inhabit,” replied the voice, mournfully;

“I was mortal, but am fiend. I was merciless, but am pitiful. Thou dost feel that I

shudder.—My teeth chatter as I speak, yet it is not with the chilliness of the night

—of the night without end. But this hideousness is insufferable. How canst thou

tranquilly sleep? I cannot rest for the cry of these great agonies. These sights are

more than I can bear. Get thee up! Come with me into the outer Night, and let

me unfold to thee the graves. Is not this a spectacle of woe?—Behold!”

I looked; and the unseen figure, which still grasped me by the wrist, had caused to be thrown open the graves of all mankind, and from each issued the faint phosphoric radiance of decay, so that I could see into the innermost recesses, and there view the shrouded bodies in their sad and solemn slumbers with the worm. But alas! the real sleepers were fewer, by many millions, than those who slumbered not at all; and there was a feeble struggling; and there was

a general sad unrest; and from out the depths of the countless pits there came a

melancholy rustling from the garments of the buried. And of those who seemed

tranquilly to repose, I saw that a vast number had changed, in a greater or less

degree, the rigid and uneasy position in which they had originally been

entombed. And the voice again said to me as I gazed:

“Is it not—oh! is it not a pitiful sight?”—but, before I could find words to reply, the figure had ceased to grasp my wrist, the phosphoric lights expired, and

the graves were closed with a sudden violence, while from out them arose a tumult of despairing cries, saying again: “Is it not—O, God, is it not a very pitiful sight?”

Phantasies such as these, presenting themselves at night, extended their terrific

influence far into my waking hours. My nerves became thoroughly unstrung, and

I fell a prey to perpetual horror. I hesitated to ride, or to walk, or to indulge in

any exercise that would carry me from home. In fact, I no longer dared trust myself out of the immediate presence of those who were aware of my proneness

to catalepsy, lest, falling into one of my usual fits, I should be buried before my

real condition could be ascertained. I doubted the care, the fidelity of my dearest

friends. I dreaded that, in some trance of more than customary duration, they might be prevailed upon to regard me as irrecoverable. I even went so far as to

fear that, as I occasioned much trouble, they might be glad to consider any very

protracted attack as sufficient excuse for getting rid of me altogether. It was in vain they endeavored to reassure me by the most solemn promises. I exacted the

most sacred oaths, that under no circumstances they would bury me until

decomposition had so materially advanced as to render farther preservation

impossible. And, even then, my mortal terrors would listen to no reason—would

accept no consolation. I entered into a series of elaborate precautions. Among other things, I had the family vault so remodelled as to admit of being readily opened from within. The slightest pressure upon a long lever that extended far into the tomb would cause the iron portal to fly back. There were arrangements

also for the free admission of air and light, and convenient receptacles for food

and water, within immediate reach of the coffin intended for my reception. This

coffin was warmly and softly padded, and was provided with a lid, fashioned upon the principle of the vault-door, with the addition of springs so contrived that the feeblest movement of the body would be sufficient to set it at liberty.

Besides all this, there was suspended from the roof of the tomb, a large bell, the

rope of which, it was designed, should extend through a hole in the coffin, and

so be fastened to one of the hands of the corpse. But, alas? what avails the vigilance against the Destiny of man? Not even these well-contrived securities sufficed to save from the uttermost agonies of living inhumation, a wretch to these agonies foredoomed!

There arrived an epoch—as often before there had arrived—in which I found

myself emerging from total unconsciousness into the first feeble and indefinite sense of existence. Slowly—with a tortoise gradation—

approached the faint gray

dawn of the psychal day. A torpid uneasiness. An apathetic endurance of dull pain. No care—no hope—no effort. Then, after a long interval, a ringing in the

ears; then, after a lapse still longer, a prickling or tingling sensation in the extremities; then a seemingly eternal period of pleasurable quiescence, during which the awakening feelings are struggling into thought; then a brief re-sinking

into non-entity; then a sudden recovery. At length the slight quivering of an eyelid, and immediately thereupon, an electric shock of a terror, deadly and indefinite, which sends the blood in torrents from the temples to the heart. And

now the first positive effort to think. And now the first endeavor to remember.

And now a partial and evanescent success. And now the memory has so far

regained its dominion, that, in some measure, I am cognizant of my state. I feel

that I am not awaking from ordinary sleep. I recollect that I have been subject to

catalepsy. And now, at last, as if by the rush of an ocean, my shuddering spirit is

overwhelmed by the one grim Danger—by the one spectral and ever-prevalent

idea.

For some minutes after this fancy possessed me, I remained without motion.

And why? I could not summon courage to move. I dared not make the effort which was to satisfy me of my fate—and yet there was something at my heart which whispered me it was sure. Despair—such as no other species of

wretchedness ever calls into being—despair alone urged me, after long

irresolution, to uplift the heavy lids of my eyes. I uplifted them. It was

dark—all

dark. I knew that the fit was over. I knew that the crisis of my disorder had long

passed. I knew that I had now fully recovered the use of my visual faculties—

and yet it was dark—all dark—the intense and utter raylessness of the Night that

endureth for evermore.

I endeavored to shriek; and my lips and my parched tongue moved

convulsively together in the attempt—but no voice issued from the cavernous lungs, which oppressed as if by the weight of some incumbent mountain, gasped

and palpitated, with the heart, at every elaborate and struggling inspiration.

The movement of the jaws, in this effort to cry aloud, showed me that they were bound up, as is usual with the dead. I felt, too, that I lay upon some hard

substance, and by something similar my sides were, also, closely compressed. So

far, I had not ventured to stir any of my limbs—but now I violently threw up my

arms, which had been lying at length, with the wrists crossed. They struck a solid wooden substance, which extended above my person at an elevation of not

more than six inches from my face. I could no longer doubt that I reposed within

a coffin at last.

And now, amid all my infinite miseries, came sweetly the cherub Hope —for I

thought of my precautions. I writhed, and made spasmodic exertions to force open the lid: it would not move. I felt my wrists for the bell-rope: it was not to

be found. And now the Comforter fled for ever, and a still sterner Despair reigned triumphant; for I could not help perceiving the absence of the paddings

which I had so carefully prepared—and then, too, there came suddenly to my nostrils the strong peculiar odor of moist earth. The conclusion was irresistible. I

was not within the vault. I had fallen into a trance while absent from home—

while among strangers—when, or how, I could not remember—and it was they

who had buried me as a dog—nailed up in some common coffin—and thrust

deep, deep, and for ever, into some ordinary and nameless grave.

As this awful conviction forced itself, thus, into the innermost chambers of my

soul, I once again struggled to cry aloud. And in this second endeavor I succeeded. A long, wild, and continuous shriek, or yell of agony, resounded through the realms of the subterranean Night.

“Hillo! hillo, there!” said a gruff voice, in reply.

“What the devil’s the matter now!” said a second.

“Get out o’ that!” said a third.

“What do you mean by yowling in that ere kind of style, like a cattymount?”

said a fourth; and hereupon I was seized and shaken without ceremony, for several minutes, by a junto of very rough-looking individuals. They did not arouse me from my slumber—for I was wide awake when I screamed—but they

restored me to the full possession of my memory.

This adventure occurred near Richmond, in Virginia. Accompanied by a

friend, I had proceeded, upon a gunning expedition, some miles down the banks

of the James River. Night approached, and we were overtaken by a storm. The

cabin of a small sloop lying at anchor in the stream, and laden with garden mould, afforded us the only available shelter. We made the best of it, and passed

the night on board. I slept in one of the only two berths in the vessel—and the

berths of a sloop of sixty or twenty tons need scarcely be described. That which I

occupied had no bedding of any kind. Its extreme width was eighteen inches.

The distance of its bottom from the deck overhead was precisely the same. I found it a matter of exceeding difficulty to squeeze myself in. Nevertheless, I slept soundly, and the whole of my vision—for it was no dream, and no

nightmare—arose naturally from the circumstances of my position—from my

ordinary bias of thought—and from the difficulty, to which I have alluded, of collecting my senses, and especially of regaining my memory, for a long time after awaking from slumber. The men who shook me were the crew of the sloop,

and some laborers engaged to unload it. From the load itself came the earthly smell. The bandage about the jaws was a silk handkerchief in which I had bound

up my head, in default of my customary nightcap.

The tortures endured, however, were indubitably quite equal for the time, to those of actual sepulture. They were fearfully—they were inconceivably

hideous; but out of Evil proceeded Good; for their very excess wrought in my spirit an inevitable revulsion. My soul acquired tone—acquired temper. I went abroad. I took vigorous exercise. I breathed the free air of Heaven. I thought upon other subjects than Death. I discarded my medical books. “Buchan” I

burned. I read no “Night Thoughts”—no fustian about churchyards—

no

bugaboo tales—such as this. In short, I became a new man, and lived a man's life. From that memorable night, I dismissed forever my charnel apprehensions,

and with them vanished the cataleptic disorder, of which, perhaps, they had been

less the consequence than the cause.

There are moments when, even to the sober eye of Reason, the world of our

sad Humanity may assume the semblance of a Hell—but the imagination of man

is no Carathis, to explore with impunity its every cavern. Alas! the grim legion

of sepulchral terrors cannot be regarded as altogether fanciful—but, like the Demons in whose company Afrasiab made his voyage down the Oxus, they must

sleep, or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber, or we perish.

THE DOMAIN OF ARNHEIM

The garden like a lady fair was cut,

That lay as if she slumbered in delight,

And to the open skies her eyes did shut.

The azure fields of Heaven were 'sembled right

In a large round, set with the flowers of light.

The flowers de luce, and the round sparks of dew.

That hung upon their azure leaves did shew

Like twinkling stars that sparkle in the evening blue.

Giles Fletcher.

FROM his cradle to his grave a gale of prosperity bore my friend Ellison along. Nor do I use the word prosperity in its mere worldly sense. I mean it as

synonymous with happiness. The person of whom I speak seemed born for the

purpose of foreshadowing the doctrines of Turgot, Price, Priestley, and

Condorcet—of exemplifying by individual instance what has been deemed the

chimera of the perfectionists. In the brief existence of Ellison I fancy that I have

seen refuted the dogma, that in man's very nature lies some hidden principle, the

antagonist of bliss. An anxious examination of his career has given me to understand that in general, from the violation of a few simple laws of humanity

arises the wretchedness of mankind—that as a species we have in our possession

the as yet unwrought elements of content—and that, even now, in the present darkness and madness of all thought on the great question of the social

condition, it is not impossible that man, the individual, under certain unusual and

highly fortuitous conditions, may be happy.

With opinions such as these my young friend, too, was fully imbued, and thus

it is worthy of observation that the uninterrupted enjoyment which distinguished

his life was, in great measure, the result of preconcert. It is indeed evident that

with less of the instinctive philosophy which, now and then, stands so well in the

stead of experience, Mr. Ellison would have found himself

precipitated, by the very extraordinary success of his life, into the common vortex of unhappiness which yawns for those of pre-eminent endowments. But it is by no means my object to pen an essay on happiness. The ideas of my friend may be summed up

in a few words. He admitted but four elementary principles, or more strictly, conditions of bliss. That which he considered chief was (strange to say!) the simple and purely physical one of free exercise in the open air. “The health,” he

said, “attainable by other means is scarcely worth the name.” He instanced the ecstasies of the fox-hunter, and pointed to the tillers of the earth, the only people who, as a class, can be fairly considered happier than others. His second

condition was the love of woman. His third, and most difficult of realization, was the contempt of ambition. His fourth was an object of unceasing pursuit; and

he held that, other things being equal, the extent of attainable happiness was in

proportion to the spirituality of this object.

Ellison was remarkable in the continuous profusion of good gifts lavished

upon him by fortune. In personal grace and beauty he exceeded all men. His intellect was of that order to which the acquisition of knowledge is less a labor

than an intuition and a necessity. His family was one of the most illustrious of the empire. His bride was the loveliest and most devoted of women. His

possessions had been always ample; but on the attainment of his majority, it was

discovered that one of those extraordinary freaks of fate had been played in his

behalf which startle the whole social world amid which they occur, and seldom

fail radically to alter the moral constitution of those who are their objects.

It appears that about a hundred years before Mr. Ellison's coming of age, there

had died, in a remote province, one Mr. Seabright Ellison. This gentleman had amassed a princely fortune, and, having no immediate connections, conceived

the whim of suffering his wealth to accumulate for a century after his decease.

Minutely and sagaciously directing the various modes of investment, he

bequeathed the aggregate amount to the nearest of blood, bearing the name of Ellison, who should be alive at the end of the hundred years. Many attempts had

been made to set aside this singular bequest; their ex post facto character rendered them abortive; but the attention of a jealous government was aroused,

and a legislative act finally obtained, forbidding all similar accumulations. This

act, however, did not prevent young Ellison from entering into possession, on his

twenty-first birthday, as the heir of his ancestor Seabright, of a fortune of four hundred and fifty millions of dollars. (*1)

When it had become known that such was the enormous wealth inherited,

there were, of course, many speculations as to the mode of its disposal. The magnitude and the immediate availability of the sum bewildered all who thought

on the topic. The possessor of any appreciable amount of money might have been imagined to perform any one of a thousand things. With riches merely surpassing those of any citizen, it would have been easy to suppose him

engaging to supreme excess in the fashionable extravagances of his time—or

busying himself with political intrigue—or aiming at ministerial

power—or

purchasing increase of nobility—or collecting large museums of virtu —or

playing the munificent patron of letters, of science, of art—or endowing, and bestowing his name upon extensive institutions of charity. But for the

inconceivable wealth in the actual possession of the heir, these objects and all

ordinary objects were felt to afford too limited a field. Recourse was had to figures, and these but sufficed to confound. It was seen that, even at three per cent., the annual income of the inheritance amounted to no less than thirteen millions and five hundred thousand dollars; which was one million and one

hundred and twenty-five thousand per month; or thirty-six thousand nine

hundred and eighty-six per day; or one thousand five hundred and forty-one per

hour; or six and twenty dollars for every minute that flew. Thus the usual track

of supposition was thoroughly broken up. Men knew not what to imagine. There

were some who even conceived that Mr. Ellison would divest himself of at least

one-half of his fortune, as of utterly superfluous opulence—enriching whole

troops of his relatives by division of his superabundance. To the nearest of these

he did, in fact, abandon the very unusual wealth which was his own before the

inheritance.

I was not surprised, however, to perceive that he had long made up his mind

on a point which had occasioned so much discussion to his friends. Nor was I greatly astonished at the nature of his decision. In regard to individual charities

he had satisfied his conscience. In the possibility of any improvement, properly

so called, being effected by man himself in the general condition of man, he had

(I am sorry to confess it) little faith. Upon the whole, whether happily or unhappily, he was thrown back, in very great measure, upon self.

In the widest and noblest sense he was a poet. He comprehended, moreover,

the true character, the august aims, the supreme majesty and dignity of the poetic

sentiment. The fullest, if not the sole proper satisfaction of this sentiment he instinctively felt to lie in the creation of novel forms of beauty. Some

peculiarities, either in his early education, or in the nature of his intellect, had tinged with what is termed materialism all his ethical speculations; and it was this bias, perhaps, which led him to believe that the most advantageous at least,

if not the sole legitimate field for the poetic exercise, lies in the creation of novel moods of purely physical loveliness. Thus it happened he became neither

musician nor poet—if we use this latter term in its every-day acceptation. Or it

might have been that he neglected to become either, merely in pursuance of his

idea that in contempt of ambition is to be found one of the essential principles of

happiness on earth. Is it not indeed, possible that, while a high order of genius is

necessarily ambitious, the highest is above that which is termed ambition? And

may it not thus happen that many far greater than Milton have contentedly remained “mute and inglorious?” I believe that the world has never seen—and that, unless through some series of accidents goading the noblest order of mind

into distasteful exertion, the world will never see—that full extent of triumphant

execution, in the richer domains of art, of which the human nature is absolutely capable.

Ellison became neither musician nor poet; although no man lived more

profoundly enamored of music and poetry. Under other circumstances than those

which invested him, it is not impossible that he would have become a painter.

Sculpture, although in its nature rigorously poetical was too limited in its extent

and consequences, to have occupied, at any time, much of his attention. And I have now mentioned all the provinces in which the common understanding of

the poetic sentiment has declared it capable of expatiating. But Ellison

maintained that the richest, the truest, and most natural, if not altogether the most extensive province, had been unaccountably neglected. No definition had spoken

of the landscape-gardener as of the poet; yet it seemed to my friend that the creation of the landscape-garden offered to the proper Muse the most

magnificent of opportunities. Here, indeed, was the fairest field for the display of

imagination in the endless combining of forms of novel beauty; the elements to

enter into combination being, by a vast superiority, the most glorious which the

earth could afford. In the multiform and multicolor of the flowers and

the trees,

he recognised the most direct and energetic efforts of Nature at physical

loveliness. And in the direction or concentration of this effort—or, more

properly, in its adaptation to the eyes which were to behold it on earth—he perceived that he should be employing the best means—laboring to the greatest

advantage—in the fulfilment, not only of his own destiny as poet, but of the august purposes for which the Deity had implanted the poetic sentiment in man.

“Its adaptation to the eyes which were to behold it on earth.” In his

explanation of this phraseology, Mr. Ellison did much toward solving what has

always seemed to me an enigma:—I mean the fact (which none but the ignorant

dispute) that no such combination of scenery exists in nature as the painter of genius may produce. No such paradises are to be found in reality as have glowed

on the canvas of Claude. In the most enchanting of natural landscapes, there will

always be found a defect or an excess—many excesses and defects. While the component parts may defy, individually, the highest skill of the artist, the arrangement of these parts will always be susceptible of improvement. In short,

no position can be attained on the wide surface of the natural earth, from which

an artistical eye, looking steadily, will not find matter of offence in what is termed the “composition” of the landscape. And yet how unintelligible is this! In

all other matters we are justly instructed to regard nature as supreme. With her

details we shrink from competition. Who shall presume to imitate the

colors of

the tulip, or to improve the proportions of the lily of the valley? The criticism

which says, of sculpture or portraiture, that here nature is to be exalted or idealized rather than imitated, is in error. No pictorial or sculptural combinations

of points of human liveliness do more than approach the living and breathing beauty. In landscape alone is the principle of the critic true; and, having felt its

truth here, it is but the headlong spirit of generalization which has led him to pronounce it true throughout all the domains of art. Having, I say, felt its truth here; for the feeling is no affectation or chimera. The mathematics afford no more absolute demonstrations than the sentiments of his art yields the artist. He

not only believes, but positively knows, that such and such apparently arbitrary

arrangements of matter constitute and alone constitute the true beauty. His reasons, however, have not yet been matured into expression. It remains for a more profound analysis than the world has yet seen, fully to investigate and express them. Nevertheless he is confirmed in his instinctive opinions by the voice of all his brethren. Let a “composition” be defective; let an emendation be

wrought in its mere arrangement of form; let this emendation be submitted to every artist in the world; by each will its necessity be admitted. And even far more than this:—in remedy of the defective composition, each insulated member

of the fraternity would have suggested the identical emendation.

I repeat that in landscape arrangements alone is the physical nature susceptible

of exaltation, and that, therefore, her susceptibility of improvement at this one point, was a mystery I had been unable to solve. My own thoughts on the subject

had rested in the idea that the primitive intention of nature would have so arranged the earth’s surface as to have fulfilled at all points man’s sense of perfection in the beautiful, the sublime, or the

picturesque; but that this primitive intention had been frustrated by the known geological disturbances—

disturbances of form and color—grouping, in the correction or allaying of which

lies the soul of art. The force of this idea was much weakened, however, by the

necessity which it involved of considering the disturbances abnormal and

unadapted to any purpose. It was Ellison who suggested that they were

prognostic of death. He thus explained:—Admit the earthly immortality of man

to have been the first intention. We have then the primitive arrangement of the earth's surface adapted to his blissful estate, as not existent but designed. The disturbances were the preparations for his subsequently conceived deathful

condition.

"Now," said my friend, "what we regard as exaltation of the landscape may be

really such, as respects only the moral or human point of view. Each alteration of

the natural scenery may possibly effect a blemish in the picture, if we can suppose this picture viewed at large—in mass—from some point distant from the

earth's surface, although not beyond the limits of its atmosphere. It is easily understood that what might improve a closely scrutinized detail, may at the same

time injure a general or more distantly observed effect. There may be a class of

beings, human once, but now invisible to humanity, to whom, from afar, our disorder may seem order—our unpicturesqueness picturesque, in a word, the

earth-angels, for whose scrutiny more especially than our own, and for

whose death-refined appreciation of the beautiful, may have been set in array by God the wide landscape-gardens of the hemispheres."

In the course of discussion, my friend quoted some passages from a writer on

landscape-gardening who has been supposed to have well treated his theme:

"There are properly but two styles of landscape-gardening, the natural and the

artificial. One seeks to recall the original beauty of the country, by adapting its

means to the surrounding scenery, cultivating trees in harmony with the hills or

plain of the neighboring land; detecting and bringing into practice those nice relations of size, proportion, and color which, hid from the common observer, are revealed everywhere to the experienced student of nature. The result of the natural style of gardening, is seen rather in the absence of all defects and incongruities—in the prevalence of a healthy harmony and order—than in the

creation of any special wonders or miracles. The artificial style has as many varieties as there are different tastes to gratify. It has a certain general relation to the various styles of building. There are the stately avenues and retirements of Versailles; Italian terraces; and a various mixed old English style, which bears some relation to the domestic Gothic or English Elizabethan architecture.

Whatever may be said against the abuses of the artificial landscape-gardening, a

mixture of pure art in a garden scene adds to it a great beauty. This is partly pleasing to the eye, by the show of order and design, and partly moral. A terrace,

with an old moss-covered balustrade, calls up at once to the eye the fair forms that have passed there in other days. The slightest exhibition of art is an evidence

of care and human interest."

"From what I have already observed," said Ellison, "you will

understand that I

reject the idea, here expressed, of recalling the original beauty of the country.

The original beauty is never so great as that which may be introduced. Of course,

every thing depends on the selection of a spot with capabilities. What is said about detecting and bringing into practice nice relations of size, proportion, and

color, is one of those mere vaguenesses of speech which serve to veil inaccuracy

of thought. The phrase quoted may mean any thing, or nothing, and guides in no

degree. That the true result of the natural style of gardening is seen rather in the

absence of all defects and incongruities than in the creation of any special

wonders or miracles, is a proposition better suited to the grovelling apprehension of the herd than to the fervid dreams of the man of genius. The negative merit suggested appertains to that hobbling criticism which, in letters, would elevate Addison into apotheosis. In truth, while that virtue which consists in the mere avoidance of vice appeals directly to the understanding, and can thus be

circumscribed in rule, the loftier virtue, which flames in creation, can be apprehended in its results alone. Rule applies but to the merits of denial—to the

excellencies which refrain. Beyond these, the critical art can but suggest. We may be instructed to build a “Cato,” but we are in vain told how to conceive a

Parthenon or an “Inferno.” The thing done, however; the wonder accomplished;

and the capacity for apprehension becomes universal. The sophists of the

negative school who, through inability to create, have scoffed at

creation, are now found the loudest in applause. What, in its chrysalis condition of principle,

affronted their demure reason, never fails, in its maturity of accomplishment, to

extort admiration from their instinct of beauty.

“The author’s observations on the artificial style,” continued Ellison, “are less

objectionable. A mixture of pure art in a garden scene adds to it a great beauty.

This is just; as also is the reference to the sense of human interest. The principle

expressed is incontrovertible—but there may be something beyond it. There may

be an object in keeping with the principle—an object unattainable by the means

ordinarily possessed by individuals, yet which, if attained, would lend a charm to

the landscape-garden far surpassing that which a sense of merely human interest

could bestow. A poet, having very unusual pecuniary resources, might, while retaining the necessary idea of art or culture, or, as our author expresses it, of interest, so imbue his designs at once with extent and novelty of beauty, as to convey the sentiment of spiritual interference. It will be seen that, in bringing about such result, he secures all the advantages of interest or design, while relieving his work of the harshness or technicality of the worldly art. In the most

rugged of wildernesses—in the most savage of the scenes of pure nature—there

is apparent the art of a creator; yet this art is apparent to reflection only; in no respect has it the obvious force of a feeling. Now let us suppose this sense of the

Almighty design to be one step depressed—to be brought into something like harmony or consistency with the sense of human art—

to form an intermedium

between the two:—let us imagine, for example, a landscape whose combined

vastness and definitiveness—whose united beauty, magnificence, and

strangeness, shall convey the idea of care, or culture, or superintendence, on the

part of beings superior, yet akin to humanity—then the sentiment of interest is preserved, while the art intervolved is made to assume the air of an intermediate

or secondary nature—a nature which is not God, nor an emanation from God, but which still is nature in the sense of the handiwork of the angels that hover between man and God."

It was in devoting his enormous wealth to the embodiment of a vision such as

this—in the free exercise in the open air ensured by the personal superintendence

of his plans—in the unceasing object which these plans afforded—in the high spirituality of the object—in the contempt of ambition which it enabled him truly

to feel—in the perennial springs with which it gratified, without possibility of satiating, that one master passion of his soul, the thirst for beauty, above all, it was in the sympathy of a woman, not unwomanly, whose loveliness and love

enveloped his existence in the purple atmosphere of Paradise, that Ellison

thought to find, and found, exemption from the ordinary cares of humanity, with

a far greater amount of positive happiness than ever glowed in the rapt day-dreams of De Stael.

I despair of conveying to the reader any distinct conception of the marvels which my friend did actually accomplish. I wish to describe, but am disheartened

by the difficulty of description, and hesitate between detail and

generality.

Perhaps the better course will be to unite the two in their extremes.

Mr. Ellison's first step regarded, of course, the choice of a locality, and scarcely had he commenced thinking on this point, when the luxuriant nature of

the Pacific Islands arrested his attention. In fact, he had made up his mind for a

voyage to the South Seas, when a night's reflection induced him to abandon the

idea. "Were I misanthropic," he said, "such a locale would suit me. The

thoroughness of its insulation and seclusion, and the difficulty of ingress and egress, would in such case be the charm of charms; but as yet I am not Timon. I

wish the composure but not the depression of solitude. There must remain with

me a certain control over the extent and duration of my repose. There will be frequent hours in which I shall need, too, the sympathy of the poetic in what I have done. Let me seek, then, a spot not far from a populous city—whose

vicinity, also, will best enable me to execute my plans."

In search of a suitable place so situated, Ellison travelled for several years, and I was permitted to accompany him. A thousand spots with which I was

enraptured he rejected without hesitation, for reasons which satisfied me, in the

end, that he was right. We came at length to an elevated table-land of wonderful

fertility and beauty, affording a panoramic prospect very little less in extent than

that of Aetna, and, in Ellison's opinion as well as my own, surpassing the far-famed view from that mountain in all the true elements of the picturesque.

“I am aware,” said the traveller, as he drew a sigh of deep delight after gazing

on this scene, entranced, for nearly an hour, “I know that here, in my circumstances, nine-tenths of the most fastidious of men would rest content. This

panorama is indeed glorious, and I should rejoice in it but for the excess of its glory. The taste of all the architects I have ever known leads them, for the sake

of ‘prospect,’ to put up buildings on hill-tops. The error is obvious. Grandeur in

any of its moods, but especially in that of extent, startles, excites—and then fatigues, depresses. For the occasional scene nothing can be better—for the constant view nothing worse. And, in the constant view, the most objectionable

phase of grandeur is that of extent; the worst phase of extent, that of distance. It

is at war with the sentiment and with the sense of seclusion—the sentiment and

sense which we seek to humor in ‘retiring to the country.’ In looking from the summit of a mountain we cannot help feeling abroad in the world. The heart-sick

avoid distant prospects as a pestilence.”

It was not until toward the close of the fourth year of our search that we found

a locality with which Ellison professed himself satisfied. It is, of course, needless to say where was the locality. The late death of my friend, in causing his domain to be thrown open to certain classes of visiters, has given to Arnheim

a species of secret and subdued if not solemn celebrity, similar in kind, although

infinitely superior in degree, to that which so long distinguished Fonthill.

The usual approach to Arnheim was by the river. The visiter left the

city in the

early morning. During the forenoon he passed between shores of a tranquil and

domestic beauty, on which grazed innumerable sheep, their white fleeces

spotting the vivid green of rolling meadows. By degrees the idea of cultivation

subsided into that of merely pastoral care. This slowly became merged in a sense

of retirement—this again in a consciousness of solitude. As the evening

approached, the channel grew more narrow, the banks more and more

precipitous; and these latter were clothed in rich, more profuse, and more sombre

foliage. The water increased in transparency. The stream took a thousand turns,

so that at no moment could its gleaming surface be seen for a greater distance than a furlong. At every instant the vessel seemed imprisoned within an

enchanted circle, having insuperable and impenetrable walls of foliage, a roof of

ultramarine satin, and no floor—the keel balancing itself with admirable nicety

on that of a phantom bark which, by some accident having been turned upside down, floated in constant company with the substantial one, for the purpose of sustaining it. The channel now became a gorge —although the term is somewhat

inapplicable, and I employ it merely because the language has no word which better represents the most striking—not the most distinctive—feature of the

scene. The character of gorge was maintained only in the height and parallelism

of the shores; it was lost altogether in their other traits. The walls of the ravine (through which the clear water still tranquilly flowed) arose to an elevation of a

hundred and occasionally of a hundred and fifty feet, and inclined so much toward each other as, in a great measure, to shut out the light of day; while the

long plume-like moss which depended densely from the intertwining shrubberies

overhead, gave the whole chasm an air of funereal gloom. The windings became

more frequent and intricate, and seemed often as if returning in upon themselves,

so that the voyager had long lost all idea of direction. He was, moreover, enwrapt in an exquisite sense of the strange. The thought of nature still remained, but her character seemed to have undergone modification, there was a

weird symmetry, a thrilling uniformity, a wizard propriety in these her works.

Not a dead branch—not a withered leaf—not a stray pebble—not a patch of the

brown earth was anywhere visible. The crystal water welled up against the clean

granite, or the unblemished moss, with a sharpness of outline that delighted while it bewildered the eye.

Having threaded the mazes of this channel for some hours, the gloom

deepening every moment, a sharp and unexpected turn of the vessel brought it suddenly, as if dropped from heaven, into a circular basin of very considerable extent when compared with the width of the gorge. It was about two hundred yards in diameter, and girt in at all points but one—that immediately fronting the

vessel as it entered—by hills equal in general height to the walls of the chasm,

although of a thoroughly different character. Their sides sloped from

the water's

edge at an angle of some forty-five degrees, and they were clothed from base to

summit—not a perceptible point escaping—in a drapery of the most gorgeous

flower-blossoms; scarcely a green leaf being visible among the sea of odorous and fluctuating color. This basin was of great depth, but so transparent was the

water that the bottom, which seemed to consist of a thick mass of small round alabaster pebbles, was distinctly visible by glimpses—that is to say, whenever the eye could permit itself not to see, far down in the inverted heaven, the duplicate blooming of the hills. On these latter there were no trees, nor even shrubs of any size. The impressions wrought on the observer were those of richness, warmth, color, quietude, uniformity, softness, delicacy, daintiness, voluptuousness, and a miraculous extremeness of culture that suggested dreams

of a new race of fairies, laborious, tasteful, magnificent, and fastidious; but as the eye traced upward the myriad-tinted slope, from its sharp junction with the water to its vague termination amid the folds of overhanging cloud, it became, indeed, difficult not to fancy a panoramic cataract of rubies, sapphires, opals, and golden onyxes, rolling silently out of the sky.

The visiter, shooting suddenly into this bay from out the gloom of the ravine, is delighted but astounded by the full orb of the declining sun, which he had supposed to be already far below the horizon, but which now confronts him, and

forms the sole termination of an otherwise limitless vista seen through another chasm-like rift in the hills.

But here the voyager quits the vessel which has borne him so far, and

descends into a light canoe of ivory, stained with arabesque devices in vivid scarlet, both within and without. The poop and beak of this boat arise high above

the water, with sharp points, so that the general form is that of an irregular crescent. It lies on the surface of the bay with the proud grace of a swan. On its

ermined floor reposes a single feathery paddle of satin-wood; but no oarsmen or

attendant is to be seen. The guest is bidden to be of good cheer—that the fates

will take care of him. The larger vessel disappears, and he is left alone in the canoe, which lies apparently motionless in the middle of the lake. While he considers what course to pursue, however, he becomes aware of a gentle

movement in the fairy bark. It slowly swings itself around until its prow points

toward the sun. It advances with a gentle but gradually accelerated velocity, while the slight ripples it creates seem to break about the ivory side in divinest

melody-seem to offer the only possible explanation of the soothing yet

melancholy music for whose unseen origin the bewildered voyager looks around

him in vain.

The canoe steadily proceeds, and the rocky gate of the vista is approached, so

that its depths can be more distinctly seen. To the right arise a chain of lofty hills rudely and luxuriantly wooded. It is observed, however, that the trait of exquisite

cleanness where the bank dips into the water, still prevails. There is not one token of the usual river debris. To the left the character of the scene is softer and more obviously artificial. Here the bank slopes upward from the stream in a very

gentle ascent, forming a broad sward of grass of a texture resembling nothing so

much as velvet, and of a brilliancy of green which would bear comparison with

the tint of the purest emerald. This plateau varies in width from ten to three hundred yards; reaching from the river-bank to a wall, fifty feet high, which extends, in an infinity of curves, but following the general

direction of the river,

until lost in the distance to the westward. This wall is of one continuous rock, and has been formed by cutting perpendicularly the once rugged precipice of the

stream's southern bank, but no trace of the labor has been suffered to remain.

The chiselled stone has the hue of ages, and is profusely overhung and

overspread with the ivy, the coral honeysuckle, the eglantine, and the clematis.

The uniformity of the top and bottom lines of the wall is fully relieved by

occasional trees of gigantic height, growing singly or in small groups, both along the plateau and in the domain behind the wall, but in close proximity to it; so that frequent limbs (of the black walnut especially) reach over and dip their pendent extremities into the water. Farther back within the domain, the vision is

impeded by an impenetrable screen of foliage.

These things are observed during the canoe's gradual approach to what I have

called the gate of the vista. On drawing nearer to this, however, its chasm-like appearance vanishes; a new outlet from the bay is discovered to the left—in which direction the wall is also seen to sweep, still following the general course

of the stream. Down this new opening the eye cannot penetrate very far; for the

stream, accompanied by the wall, still bends to the left, until both are swallowed

up by the leaves.

The boat, nevertheless, glides magically into the winding channel; and here the shore opposite the wall is found to resemble that opposite the wall in the straight vista. Lofty hills, rising occasionally into mountains, and covered with vegetation in wild luxuriance, still shut in the scene.

Floating gently onward, but with a velocity slightly augmented, the voyager,

after many short turns, finds his progress apparently barred by a gigantic gate or

rather door of burnished gold, elaborately carved and fretted, and reflecting the

direct rays of the now fast-sinking sun with an effulgence that seems to wreath

the whole surrounding forest in flames. This gate is inserted in the lofty wall; which here appears to cross the river at right angles. In a few moments, however,

it is seen that the main body of the water still sweeps in a gentle and extensive

curve to the left, the wall following it as before, while a stream of considerable

volume, diverging from the principal one, makes its way, with a slight ripple, under the door, and is thus hidden from sight. The canoe falls into the lesser channel and approaches the gate. Its ponderous wings are slowly and musically

expanded. The boat glides between them, and commences a rapid descent into a

vast amphitheatre entirely begirt with purple mountains, whose bases are laved

by a gleaming river throughout the full extent of their circuit. Meantime the whole Paradise of Arnheim bursts upon the view. There is a gush of entrancing

melody; there is an oppressive sense of strange sweet odor,—there is a dream-like intermingling to the eye of tall slender Eastern trees—bosky shrubberies—

flocks of golden and crimson birds—lily-fringed lakes—meadows of violets,

tulips, poppies, hyacinths, and tuberoses—long intertangled lines of silver

streamlets—and, upspringing confusedly from amid all, a mass of semi-Gothic,

semi-Saracenic architecture sustaining itself by miracle in mid-air, glittering in the red sunlight with a hundred oriels, minarets, and pinnacles; and seeming the

phantom handiwork, conjointly, of the Sylphs, of the Fairies, of the Genii and of the Gnomes.

LANDOR'S COTTAGE

A Pendant to "The Domain of Arnheim"

DURING A pedestrian trip last summer, through one or two of the river

counties of New York, I found myself, as the day declined, somewhat

embarrassed about the road I was pursuing. The land undulated very remarkably;

and my path, for the last hour, had wound about and about so confusedly, in its

effort to keep in the valleys, that I no longer knew in what direction lay the sweet

village of B——, where I had determined to stop for the night. The sun had scarcely shone—strictly speaking—during the day, which nevertheless, had been

unpleasantly warm. A smoky mist, resembling that of the Indian summer,

enveloped all things, and of course, added to my uncertainty. Not that I cared much about the matter. If I did not hit upon the village before sunset, or even before dark, it was more than possible that a little Dutch farmhouse, or

something of that kind, would soon make its appearance—although, in fact, the

neighborhood (perhaps on account of being more picturesque than fertile) was very sparsely inhabited. At all events, with my knapsack for a pillow, and my hound as a sentry, a bivouac in the open air was just the thing which would have

amused me. I sauntered on, therefore, quite at ease—Ponto taking charge of my

gun—until at length, just as I had begun to consider whether the numerous little

glades that led hither and thither, were intended to be paths at all, I was conducted by one of them into an unquestionable carriage track. There could be

no mistaking it. The traces of light wheels were evident; and although the tall shrubberies and overgrown undergrowth met overhead, there was no obstruction

whatever below, even to the passage of a Virginian mountain wagon—the most

aspiring vehicle, I take it, of its kind. The road, however, except in being open

through the wood—if wood be not too weighty a name for such an assemblage

of light trees—and except in the particulars of evident wheel-tracks—bore no resemblance to any road I had before seen. The tracks of which I speak were but

faintly perceptible—having been impressed upon the firm, yet pleasantly moist surface of—what looked more like green Genoese velvet than any thing else. It

was grass, clearly—but grass such as we seldom see out of England—so short,

so thick, so even, and so vivid in color. Not a single impediment lay in the wheel-route—not even a chip or dead twig. The stones that once obstructed the

way had been carefully placed—not thrown-along the sides of the lane, so as to

define its boundaries at bottom with a kind of half-precise, half-negligent, and

wholly picturesque definition. Clumps of wild flowers grew everywhere, luxuriantly, in the interspaces.

What to make of all this, of course I knew not. Here was art undoubtedly—

that did not surprise me—all roads, in the ordinary sense, are works of art; nor

can I say that there was much to wonder at in the mere excess of art manifested;

all that seemed to have been done, might have been done here—with such

natural “capabilities” (as they have it in the books on Landscape Gardening)—

with very little labor and expense. No; it was not the amount but the character of

the art which caused me to take a seat on one of the blossomy stones and gaze up

and down this fairy-like avenue for half an hour or more in bewildered

admiration. One thing became more and more evident the longer I gazed: an artist, and one with a most scrupulous eye for form, had superintended all these

arrangements. The greatest care had been taken to preserve a due medium

between the neat and graceful on the one hand, and the pittoresque, in the true

sense of the Italian term, on the other. There were few straight, and no long uninterrupted lines. The same effect of curvature or of color appeared twice, usually, but not oftener, at any one point of view. Everywhere was variety in uniformity. It was a piece of “composition,” in which the most fastidiously critical taste could scarcely have suggested an emendation.

I had turned to the right as I entered this road, and now, arising, I continued in

the same direction. The path was so serpentine, that at no moment could I trace

its course for more than two or three paces in advance. Its character did not undergo any material change.

Presently the murmur of water fell gently upon my ear—and in a few

moments afterward, as I turned with the road somewhat more abruptly than

hitherto, I became aware that a building of some kind lay at the foot of a gentle

declivity just before me. I could see nothing distinctly on account of the mist which occupied all the little valley below. A gentle breeze, however, now arose,

as the sun was about descending; and while I remained standing on the brow of

the slope, the fog gradually became dissipated into wreaths, and so floated over

the scene.

As it came fully into view—thus gradually as I describe it—piece by piece, here a tree, there a glimpse of water, and here again the summit of a chimney, I

could scarcely help fancying that the whole was one of the ingenious illusions sometimes exhibited under the name of “vanishing pictures.”

By the time, however, that the fog had thoroughly disappeared, the sun had made its way down behind the gentle hills, and thence, as if with a slight chassez

to the south, had come again fully into sight, glaring with a purplish lustre

through a chasm that entered the valley from the west. Suddenly, therefore—and as if by the hand of magic—this whole valley and every thing in it became brilliantly visible.

The first coup d’oeil, as the sun slid into the position described, impressed me

very much as I have been impressed, when a boy, by the concluding scene of some well-arranged theatrical spectacle or melodrama. Not even the monstrosity

of color was wanting; for the sunlight came out through the chasm, tinted all orange and purple; while the vivid green of the grass in the valley was reflected

more or less upon all objects from the curtain of vapor that still hung overhead,

as if loth to take its total departure from a scene so enchantingly beautiful.

The little vale into which I thus peered down from under the fog canopy could

not have been more than four hundred yards long; while in breadth it varied from

fifty to one hundred and fifty or perhaps two hundred. It was most narrow at its

northern extremity, opening out as it tended southwardly, but with no very precise regularity. The widest portion was within eighty yards of the southern extreme. The slopes which encompassed the vale could not fairly be called hills,

unless at their northern face. Here a precipitous ledge of granite arose to a height

of some ninety feet; and, as I have mentioned, the valley at this point was not more than fifty feet wide; but as the visiter proceeded southwardly from the cliff,

he found on his right hand and on his left, declivities at once less high, less precipitous, and less rocky. All, in a word, sloped and softened to the south; and

yet the whole vale was engirdled by eminences, more or less high, except at two

points. One of these I have already spoken of. It lay considerably to the north of

west, and was where the setting sun made its way, as I have before described, into the amphitheatre, through a cleanly cut natural cleft in the granite

embankment; this fissure might have been ten yards wide at its widest

point, so

far as the eye could trace it. It seemed to lead up, up like a natural causeway, into the recesses of unexplored mountains and forests. The other opening was

directly at the southern end of the vale. Here, generally, the slopes were nothing

more than gentle inclinations, extending from east to west about one hundred and fifty yards. In the middle of this extent was a depression, level with the ordinary floor of the valley. As regards vegetation, as well as in respect to every

thing else, the scene softened and sloped to the south. To the north—on the craggy precipice—a few paces from the verge—up sprang the magnificent

trunks of numerous hickories, black walnuts, and chestnuts, interspersed with occasional oak, and the strong lateral branches thrown out by the walnuts

especially, spread far over the edge of the cliff. Proceeding southwardly, the explorer saw, at first, the same class of trees, but less and less lofty and

Salvatorish in character; then he saw the gentler elm, succeeded by the sassafras and locust—these again by the softer linden, red-bud, catalpa, and maple—these

yet again by still more graceful and more modest varieties. The whole face of the

southern declivity was covered with wild shrubbery alone—an occasional silver

willow or white poplar excepted. In the bottom of the valley itself—(for it must

be borne in mind that the vegetation hitherto mentioned grew only on the cliffs

or hillsides)—were to be seen three insulated trees. One was an elm of fine size

and exquisite form: it stood guard over the southern gate of the vale.

Another was a hickory, much larger than the elm, and altogether a much finer tree, although both were exceedingly beautiful: it seemed to have taken charge of the

northwestern entrance, springing from a group of rocks in the very jaws of the ravine, and throwing its graceful body, at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees,

far out into the sunshine of the amphitheatre. About thirty yards east of this tree

stood, however, the pride of the valley, and beyond all question the most magnificent tree I have ever seen, unless, perhaps, among the cypresses of the Itchiatuckanee. It was a triple-stemmed tulip-tree—the Liriodendron Tulipiferum

—one of the natural order of magnolias. Its three trunks separated from the parent at about three feet from the soil, and diverging very slightly and gradually,

were not more than four feet apart at the point where the largest stem shot out into foliage: this was at an elevation of about eighty feet. The whole height of the principal division was one hundred and twenty feet. Nothing can surpass in

beauty the form, or the glossy, vivid green of the leaves of the tulip-tree. In the

present instance they were fully eight inches wide; but their glory was altogether

eclipsed by the gorgeous splendor of the profuse blossoms. Conceive, closely congregated, a million of the largest and most resplendent tulips! Only thus can

the reader get any idea of the picture I would convey. And then the stately grace

of the clean, delicately-granulated columnar stems, the largest four feet in diameter, at twenty from the ground. The innumerable blossoms, mingling with

those of other trees scarcely less beautiful, although infinitely less majestic, filled the valley with more than Arabian perfumes.

The general floor of the amphitheatre was grass of the same character

as that I

had found in the road; if anything, more deliciously soft, thick, velvety, and miraculously green. It was hard to conceive how all this beauty had been

attained.

I have spoken of two openings into the vale. From the one to the northwest issued a rivulet, which came, gently murmuring and slightly foaming, down the

ravine, until it dashed against the group of rocks out of which sprang the insulated hickory. Here, after encircling the tree, it passed on a little to the north

of east, leaving the tulip tree some twenty feet to the south, and making no decided alteration in its course until it came near the midway between the eastern and western boundaries of the valley. At this point, after a series of sweeps, it turned off at right angles and pursued a generally southern direction meandering as it went—until it became lost in a small lake of irregular figure (although roughly oval), that lay gleaming near the lower extremity of the vale.

This lakelet was, perhaps, a hundred yards in diameter at its widest part. No crystal could be clearer than its waters. Its bottom, which could be distinctly seen, consisted altogether, of pebbles brilliantly white. Its banks, of the emerald

grass already described, rounded, rather than sloped, off into the clear heaven below; and so clear was this heaven, so perfectly, at times, did it reflect all objects above it, that where the true bank ended and where the mimic one commenced, it was a point of no little difficulty to determine. The trout, and some other varieties of fish, with which this pond seemed to be almost

inconveniently crowded, had all the appearance of veritable flying-fish. It was almost impossible to believe that they were not absolutely suspended in the air.

A light birch canoe that lay placidly on the water, was reflected in its minutest fibres with a fidelity unsurpassed by the most exquisitely polished mirror. A small island, fairly laughing with flowers in full bloom, and affording little more

space than just enough for a picturesque little building, seemingly a fowl-house

—arose from the lake not far from its northern shore—to which it was connected

by means of an inconceivably light-looking and yet very primitive bridge. It was

formed of a single, broad and thick plank of the tulip wood. This was forty feet

long, and spanned the interval between shore and shore with a slight but very perceptible arch, preventing all oscillation. From the southern extreme of the lake issued a continuation of the rivulet, which, after meandering for, perhaps, thirty yards, finally passed through the “depression” (already described) in the middle of the southern declivity, and tumbling down a sheer precipice of a hundred feet, made its devious and unnoticed way to the Hudson.

The lake was deep—at some points thirty feet—but the rivulet seldom

exceeded three, while its greatest width was about eight. Its bottom and banks were as those of the pond—if a defect could have been attributed, in point of picturesqueness, it was that of excessive neatness.

The expanse of the green turf was relieved, here and there, by an occasional

showy shrub, such as the hydrangea, or the common snowball, or the aromatic seringa; or, more frequently, by a clump of geraniums blossoming gorgeously in

great varieties. These latter grew in pots which were carefully buried in the soil,

so as to give the plants the appearance of being indigenous. Besides all this, the

lawn’s velvet was exquisitely spotted with sheep—a considerable flock of which roamed about the vale, in company with three tamed deer, and a vast number of

brilliantly-plumed ducks. A very large mastiff seemed to be in vigilant

attendance upon these animals, each and all.

Along the eastern and western cliffs—where, toward the upper portion of the

amphitheatre, the boundaries were more or less precipitous—grew ivy in great profusion—so that only here and there could even a glimpse of the naked rock

be obtained. The northern precipice, in like manner, was almost entirely clothed

by grape-vines of rare luxuriance; some springing from the soil at the base of the

cliff, and others from ledges on its face.

The slight elevation which formed the lower boundary of this little domain, was crowned by a neat stone wall, of sufficient height to prevent the escape of

the deer. Nothing of the fence kind was observable elsewhere; for nowhere else

was an artificial enclosure needed:—any stray sheep, for example, which should

attempt to make its way out of the vale by means of the ravine, would find its progress arrested, after a few yards' advance, by the precipitous ledge of rock over which tumbled the cascade that had arrested my attention as I first drew near the domain. In short, the only ingress or egress was through a gate occupying a rocky pass in the road, a few paces below the point at which I stopped to reconnoitre the scene.

I have described the brook as meandering very irregularly through the whole

of its course. Its two general directions, as I have said, were first from west to east, and then from north to south. At the turn, the stream, sweeping backward,

made an almost circular loop, so as to form a peninsula which was very nearly

an island, and which included about the sixteenth of an acre. On this peninsula

stood a dwelling-house—and when I say that this house, like the infernal terrace

seen by Vathek, "etait d'une architecture inconnue dans les annales de la terre," I

mean, merely, that its tout ensemble struck me with the keenest sense of

combined novelty and propriety—in a word, of poetry—(for, than in

the words

just employed, I could scarcely give, of poetry in the abstract, a more rigorous definition)—and I do not mean that merely outre was perceptible in any respect.

In fact nothing could well be more simple—more utterly unpretending than

this cottage. Its marvellous effect lay altogether in its artistic arrangement as a picture. I could have fancied, while I looked at it, that some eminent landscape-painter had built it with his brush.

The point of view from which I first saw the valley, was not altogether, although it was nearly, the best point from which to survey the house. I will therefore describe it as I afterwards saw it—from a position on the stone wall at

the southern extreme of the amphitheatre.

The main building was about twenty-four feet long and sixteen broad —

certainly not more. Its total height, from the ground to the apex of the roof, could

not have exceeded eighteen feet. To the west end of this structure was attached

one about a third smaller in all its proportions:—the line of its front standing back about two yards from that of the larger house, and the line of its roof, of course, being considerably depressed below that of the roof adjoining. At right

angles to these buildings, and from the rear of the main one—not exactly in the

middle—extended a third compartment, very small—being, in general, one-third

less than the western wing. The roofs of the two larger were very steep—

sweeping down from the ridge-beam with a long concave curve, and extending

at least four feet beyond the walls in front, so as to form the roofs of

two piazzas.

These latter roofs, of course, needed no support; but as they had the air of needing it, slight and perfectly plain pillars were inserted at the corners alone.

The roof of the northern wing was merely an extension of a portion of the main

roof. Between the chief building and western wing arose a very tall and rather slender square chimney of hard Dutch bricks, alternately black and red:—a slight

cornice of projecting bricks at the top. Over the gables the roofs also projected

very much:—in the main building about four feet to the east and two to the west.

The principal door was not exactly in the main division, being a little to the east

—while the two windows were to the west. These latter did not extend to the floor, but were much longer and narrower than usual—they had single shutters like doors—the panes were of lozenge form, but quite large. The door itself had

its upper half of glass, also in lozenge panes—a movable shutter secured it at night. The door to the west wing was in its gable, and quite simple—a single window looked out to the south. There was no external door to the north wing,

and it also had only one window to the east.

The blank wall of the eastern gable was relieved by stairs (with a balustrade)

running diagonally across it—the ascent being from the south. Under cover of the widely projecting eave these steps gave access to a door leading to the garret,

or rather loft—for it was lighted only by a single window to the north, and seemed to have been intended as a store-room.

The piazzas of the main building and western wing had no floors, as is usual;

but at the doors and at each window, large, flat irregular slabs of granite lay imbedded in the delicious turf, affording comfortable footing in all weather.

Excellent paths of the same material—not nicely adapted, but with the velvety sod filling frequent intervals between the stones, led hither and thither from the

house, to a crystal spring about five paces off, to the road, or to one or two out-

houses that lay to the north, beyond the brook, and were thoroughly concealed by a few locusts and catalpas.

Not more than six steps from the main door of the cottage stood the dead trunk of a fantastic pear-tree, so clothed from head to foot in the gorgeous bignonia blossoms that one required no little scrutiny to determine what manner

of sweet thing it could be. From various arms of this tree hung cages of different

kinds. In one, a large wicker cylinder with a ring at top, revelled a mocking bird;

in another an oriole; in a third the impudent bobolink—while three or four more

delicate prisons were loudly vocal with canaries.

The pillars of the piazza were enwreathed in jasmine and sweet honeysuckle;

while from the angle formed by the main structure and its west wing, in front, sprang a grape-vine of unexampled luxuriance. Scorning all restraint, it had clambered first to the lower roof—then to the higher; and along the ridge of this

latter it continued to writhe on, throwing out tendrils to the right and left, until at length it fairly attained the east gable, and fell trailing over the stairs.

The whole house, with its wings, was constructed of the old-fashioned Dutch

shingles—broad, and with unrounded corners. It is a peculiarity of this

material

to give houses built of it the appearance of being wider at bottom than at top—

after the manner of Egyptian architecture; and in the present instance, this exceedingly picturesque effect was aided by numerous pots of gorgeous flowers

that almost encompassed the base of the buildings.

The shingles were painted a dull gray; and the happiness with which this

neutral tint melted into the vivid green of the tulip tree leaves that partially overshadowed the cottage, can readily be conceived by an artist.

From the position near the stone wall, as described, the buildings were seen at

great advantage—for the southeastern angle was thrown forward—so that the

eye took in at once the whole of the two fronts, with the picturesque eastern gable, and at the same time obtained just a sufficient glimpse of the northern wing, with parts of a pretty roof to the spring-house, and nearly half of a light bridge that spanned the brook in the near vicinity of the main buildings.

I did not remain very long on the brow of the hill, although long enough to make a thorough survey of the scene at my feet. It was clear that I had wandered

from the road to the village, and I had thus good traveller's excuse to open the

gate before me, and inquire my way, at all events; so, without more ado, I proceeded.

The road, after passing the gate, seemed to lie upon a natural ledge, sloping gradually down along the face of the north-eastern cliffs. It led me on to the foot

of the northern precipice, and thence over the bridge, round by the eastern gable to the front door. In this progress, I took notice that no

sight of the out-houses could be obtained.

As I turned the corner of the gable, the mastiff bounded towards me in stern

silence, but with the eye and the whole air of a tiger. I held him out my hand, however, in token of amity—and I never yet knew the dog who was proof

against such an appeal to his courtesy. He not only shut his mouth and wagged

his tail, but absolutely offered me his paw—afterward extending his civilities to

Ponto.

As no bell was discernible, I rapped with my stick against the door, which stood half open. Instantly a figure advanced to the threshold—that of a young woman about twenty-eight years of age—slender, or rather slight, and somewhat

above the medium height. As she approached, with a certain modest decision of

step altogether indescribable. I said to myself, “Surely here I have found the perfection of natural, in contradistinction from artificial grace.” The second impression which she made on me, but by far the more vivid of the two, was that

of enthusiasm. So intense an expression of romance, perhaps I should call it, or

of unworldliness, as that which gleamed from her deep-set eyes, had never so sunk into my heart of hearts before. I know not how it is, but this peculiar expression of the eye, wreathing itself occasionally into the lips, is the most powerful, if not absolutely the sole spell, which rivets my interest in woman.

“Romance,” provided my readers fully comprehended what I would here imply

by the word—“romance” and “womanliness” seem to me convertible terms: and,

after all, what man truly loves in woman, is simply her womanhood.

The eyes of

Annie (I heard some one from the interior call her “Annie, darling!”) were

“spiritual grey;” her hair, a light chestnut: this is all I had time to observe of her.

At her most courteous of invitations, I entered—passing first into a tolerably

wide vestibule. Having come mainly to observe, I took notice that to my right as

I stepped in, was a window, such as those in front of the house; to the left, a door

leading into the principal room; while, opposite me, an open door enabled me to

see a small apartment, just the size of the vestibule, arranged as a study, and having a large bow window looking out to the north.

Passing into the parlor, I found myself with Mr. Landor—for this, I afterwards

found, was his name. He was civil, even cordial in his manner, but just then, I was more intent on observing the arrangements of the dwelling which had so much interested me, than the personal appearance of the tenant.

The north wing, I now saw, was a bed-chamber, its door opened into the

parlor. West of this door was a single window, looking toward the brook. At the

west end of the parlor, were a fireplace, and a door leading into the west wing—

probably a kitchen.

Nothing could be more rigorously simple than the furniture of the parlor. On

the floor was an ingrain carpet, of excellent texture—a white ground, spotted with small circular green figures. At the windows were

curtains of snowy white

jaconet muslin: they were tolerably full, and hung decisively, perhaps rather formally in sharp, parallel plaits to the floor—just to the floor. The walls were prepared with a French paper of great delicacy, a silver ground, with a faint green cord running zig-zag throughout. Its expanse was relieved merely by three

of Julien's exquisite lithographs a trois crayons, fastened to the wall without frames. One of these drawings was a scene of Oriental luxury, or rather

voluptuousness; another was a "carnival piece," spirited beyond compare; the third was a Greek female head—a face so divinely beautiful, and yet of an expression so provokingly indeterminate, never before arrested my attention.

The more substantial furniture consisted of a round table, a few chairs

(including a large rocking-chair), and a sofa, or rather "settee;" its material was

plain maple painted a creamy white, slightly interstriped with green; the seat of

cane. The chairs and table were "to match," but the forms of all had evidently been designed by the same brain which planned "the grounds;" it is impossible

to conceive anything more graceful.

On the table were a few books, a large, square, crystal bottle of some novel perfume, a plain ground-glass astral (not solar) lamp with an Italian shade, and a

large vase of resplendently-blooming flowers. Flowers, indeed, of gorgeous

colours and delicate odour formed the sole mere decoration of the apartment.

The fire-place was nearly filled with a vase of brilliant geranium. On a triangular

shelf in each angle of the room stood also a similar vase, varied only as to its lovely contents. One or two smaller bouquets adorned the

mantel, and late

violets clustered about the open windows.

It is not the purpose of this work to do more than give in detail, a picture of

Mr. Landor's residence—as I found it. How he made it what it was—and why—

with some particulars of Mr. Landor himself—may, possibly form the subject of

another article.

WILLIAM WILSON

What say of it? what say of CONSCIENCE grim,

That spectre in my path?

Chamberlayne's Pharronida.

LET me call myself, for the present, William Wilson. The fair page now lying

before me need not be sullied with my real appellation. This has been already too much an object for the scorn—for the horror—for the detestation of my race.

To the uttermost regions of the globe have not the indignant winds bruited its unparalleled infamy? Oh, outcast of all outcasts most abandoned!—to the earth

art thou not forever dead? to its honors, to its flowers, to its golden aspirations?

—and a cloud, dense, dismal, and limitless, does it not hang eternally between thy hopes and heaven?

I would not, if I could, here or to-day, embody a record of my later years of

unspeakable misery, and unpardonable crime. This epoch—these later years—

took unto themselves a sudden elevation in turpitude, whose origin

alone it is my

present purpose to assign. Men usually grow base by degrees. From me, in an instant, all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle. From comparatively trivial

wickedness I passed, with the stride of a giant, into more than the enormities of

an Elah-Gabalus. What chance—what one event brought this evil thing to pass,

bear with me while I relate. Death approaches; and the shadow which foreruns him has thrown a softening influence over my spirit. I long, in passing through

the dim valley, for the sympathy—I had nearly said for the pity—of my fellow

men. I would fain have them believe that I have been, in some measure, the slave

of circumstances beyond human control. I would wish them to seek out for me,

in the details I am about to give, some little oasis of fatality amid a wilderness of error. I would have them allow—what they cannot refrain from allowing—that,

although temptation may have erewhile existed as great, man was never thus, at

least, tempted before—certainly, never thus fell. And is it therefore that he has never thus suffered? Have I not indeed been living in a dream? And am I not now dying a victim to the horror and the mystery of the wildest of all sublunary

visions?

I am the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable

temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years it was more strongly developed; becoming, for many reasons,

a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and of positive injury to

myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions. Weak-minded, and beset with constitutional infirmities

akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me. Some feeble and ill-directed efforts resulted in complete

failure on their part, and, of course, in total triumph on mine. Thenceforward my

voice was a household law; and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading-strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in

all but name, the master of my own actions.

My earliest recollections of a school-life, are connected with a large,

rambling, Elizabethan house, in a misty-looking village of England, where were

a vast number of gigantic and gnarled trees, and where all the houses were excessively ancient. In truth, it was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, that venerable old town. At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of

its deeply-shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with undefinable delight, at the deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking, each hour, with sullen and sudden roar, upon the stillness of the

dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay imbedded and asleep.

It gives me, perhaps, as much of pleasure as I can now in any manner

experience, to dwell upon minute recollections of the school and its concerns.

Steeped in misery as I am—misery, alas! only too real—I shall be pardoned for

seeking relief, however slight and temporary, in the weakness of a few rambling

details. These, moreover, utterly trivial, and even ridiculous in

themselves, assume, to my fancy, adventitious importance, as connected with a period and a

locality when and where I recognise the first ambiguous monitions of the destiny

which afterwards so fully overshadowed me. Let me then remember.

The house, I have said, was old and irregular. The grounds were extensive, and a high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass,

encompassed the whole. This prison-like rampart formed the limit of our

domain; beyond it we saw but thrice a week—once every Saturday afternoon,

when, attended by two ushers, we were permitted to take brief walks in a body

through some of the neighbouring fields—and twice during Sunday, when we

were paraded in the same formal manner to the morning and evening service in

the one church of the village. Of this church the principal of our school was pastor. With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him from our remote pew in the gallery, as, with step solemn and slow, he ascended the pulpit! This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign,

with robes so glossy and so clerically flowing, with wig so minutely powdered,

so rigid and so vast,—-could this be he who, of late, with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian laws of the academy? Oh, gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution!

At an angle of the ponderous wall frowned a more ponderous gate. It was

riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes.

What impressions of deep awe did it inspire! It was never opened save for the three periodical egressions and ingressions already mentioned; then, in every creak of its mighty hinges, we found a plenitude of mystery—a world of matter

for solemn remark, or for more solemn meditation.

The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious

recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the play-ground. It was

level, and covered with fine hard gravel. I well remember it had no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house.

In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs; but through this

sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed—such as a first

advent to school or final departure thence, or perhaps, when a parent or friend having called for us, we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or Midsummer holy-days.

But the house!—how quaint an old building was this!—to me how veritably a

palace of enchantment! There was really no end to its windings—to its

incomprehensible subdivisions. It was difficult, at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories one happened to be. From each room to

every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable—inconceivable—and so

returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain

with precision, in what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned

to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars.

The school-room was the largest in the house—I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with pointed Gothic windows and a ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet, comprising the sanctum, “during hours,” of

our principal, the Reverend Dr. Bransby. It was a solid structure, with massy door, sooner than open which in the absence of the “Dominic,” we would all have willingly perished by the peine forte et dure. In other angles were two other

similar boxes, far less reverenced, indeed, but still greatly matters of awe. One of

these was the pulpit of the “classical” usher, one of the “English and

mathematical.” Interspersed about the room, crossing and recrossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn,

piled desperately with much-bethumbed books, and so beseamed with initial

letters, names at full length, grotesque figures, and other multiplied efforts of the knife, as to have entirely lost what little of original form might have been their

portion in days long departed. A huge bucket with water stood at one extremity

of the room, and a clock of stupendous dimensions at the other.

Encompassed by the massy walls of this venerable academy, I passed, yet not

in tedium or disgust, the years of the third lustrum of my life. The teeming brain

of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it; and the apparently dismal monotony of a school was replete with more intense

excitement than my riper youth has derived from luxury, or my full manhood from crime. Yet I must believe that my first mental

development had in it much

of the uncommon—even much of the outre. Upon mankind at large the events of

very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impression. All is gray shadow—a weak and irregular remembrance—an indistinct regathering of

feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric pains. With me this is not so. In childhood I

must have felt with the energy of a man what I now find stamped upon memory

in lines as vivid, as deep, and as durable as the exergues of the Carthaginian medals.

Yet in fact—in the fact of the world's view—how little was there to

remember! The morning's awakening, the nightly summons to bed; the

connings, the recitations; the periodical half-holidays, and perambulations; the play-ground, with its broils, its pastimes, its intrigues;—these, by a mental sorcery long forgotten, were made to involve a wilderness of sensation, a world

of rich incident, an universe of varied emotion, of excitement the most

passionate and spirit-stirring. "Oh, le bon temps, que ce siecle de fer!"

In truth, the ardor, the enthusiasm, and the imperiousness of my disposition, soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates, and by slow, but

natural gradations, gave me an ascendancy over all not greatly older than myself;

—over all with a single exception. This exception was found in the person of a

scholar, who, although no relation, bore the same Christian and surname as myself;—a circumstance, in fact, little remarkable; for, notwithstanding a noble

descent, mine was one of those everyday appellations which seem, by

prescriptive right, to have been, time out of mind, the common property of the mob. In this narrative I have therefore designated myself as William Wilson,—a

fictitious title not very dissimilar to the real. My namesake alone, of those who

in school phraseology constituted “our set,” presumed to compete with me in the

studies of the class—in the sports and broils of the play-ground—to refuse implicit belief in my assertions, and submission to my will—indeed, to interfere

with my arbitrary dictation in any respect whatsoever. If there is on earth a supreme and unqualified despotism, it is the despotism of a master mind in boyhood over the less energetic spirits of its companions.

Wilson’s rebellion was to me a source of the greatest embarrassment; —the

more so as, in spite of the bravado with which in public I made a point of treating him and his pretensions, I secretly felt that I feared him, and could not

help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with myself, a proof of

his true superiority; since not to be overcome cost me a perpetual struggle. Yet

this superiority—even this equality—was in truth acknowledged by no one but myself; our associates, by some unaccountable blindness, seemed not even to suspect it. Indeed, his competition, his resistance, and especially his impertinent

and dogged interference with my purposes, were not more pointed than private.

He appeared to be destitute alike of the ambition which urged, and of the passionate energy of mind which enabled me to excel. In his rivalry he might have been supposed actuated solely by a whimsical desire to thwart, astonish, or

mortify myself; although there were times when I could not help

observing, with

a feeling made up of wonder, abasement, and pique, that he mingled with his injuries, his insults, or his contradictions, a certain most inappropriate, and assuredly most unwelcome affectionateness of manner. I could only conceive

this singular behavior to arise from a consummate self-conceit assuming the vulgar airs of patronage and protection.

Perhaps it was this latter trait in Wilson's conduct, conjoined with our identity

of name, and the mere accident of our having entered the school upon the same

day, which set afloat the notion that we were brothers, among the senior classes

in the academy. These do not usually inquire with much strictness into the affairs

of their juniors. I have before said, or should have said, that Wilson was not, in

the most remote degree, connected with my family. But assuredly if we had been

brothers we must have been twins; for, after leaving Dr. Bransby's, I casually learned that my namesake was born on the nineteenth of January, 1813—and this

is a somewhat remarkable coincidence; for the day is precisely that of my own

nativity.

It may seem strange that in spite of the continual anxiety occasioned me by the rivalry of Wilson, and his intolerable spirit of contradiction, I could not bring myself to hate him altogether. We had, to be sure, nearly every day a quarrel in

which, yielding me publicly the palm of victory, he, in some manner, contrived

to make me feel that it was he who had deserved it; yet a sense of pride on my

part, and a veritable dignity on his own, kept us always upon what are called

“speaking terms,” while there were many points of strong congeniality in our tempers, operating to awake me in a sentiment which our position alone,

perhaps, prevented from ripening into friendship. It is difficult, indeed, to define, or even to describe, my real feelings towards him. They formed a motley and heterogeneous admixture;—some petulant animosity, which was not yet hatred,

some esteem, more respect, much fear, with a world of uneasy curiosity. To the

moralist it will be unnecessary to say, in addition, that Wilson and myself were

the most inseparable of companions.

It was no doubt the anomalous state of affairs existing between us, which turned all my attacks upon him, (and they were many, either open or covert) into

the channel of banter or practical joke (giving pain while assuming the aspect of

mere fun) rather than into a more serious and determined hostility. But my endeavours on this head were by no means uniformly successful, even when my

plans were the most wittily concocted; for my namesake had much about him, in

character, of that unassuming and quiet austerity which, while enjoying the poignancy of its own jokes, has no heel of Achilles in itself, and absolutely refuses to be laughed at. I could find, indeed, but one vulnerable point, and that,

lying in a personal peculiarity, arising, perhaps, from constitutional disease, would have been spared by any antagonist less at his wit’s end than myself;—my

rival had a weakness in the faucal or guttural organs, which precluded him from

raising his voice at any time above a very low whisper. Of this defect I did not

fail to take what poor advantage lay in my power.

Wilson's retaliations in kind were many; and there was one form of his

practical wit that disturbed me beyond measure. How his sagacity first

discovered at all that so petty a thing would vex me, is a question I never could

solve; but, having discovered, he habitually practised the annoyance. I had always felt aversion to my uncourtly patronymic, and its very common, if not plebeian praenomen. The words were venom in my ears; and when, upon the day

of my arrival, a second William Wilson came also to the academy, I felt angry with him for bearing the name, and doubly disgusted with the name because a stranger bore it, who would be the cause of its twofold repetition, who would be

constantly in my presence, and whose concerns, in the ordinary routine of the school business, must inevitably, on account of the detestable coincidence, be often confounded with my own.

The feeling of vexation thus engendered grew stronger with every

circumstance tending to show resemblance, moral or physical, between my rival

and myself. I had not then discovered the remarkable fact that we were of the

same age; but I saw that we were of the same height, and I perceived that we were even singularly alike in general contour of person and outline of feature. I

was galled, too, by the rumor touching a relationship, which had grown current

in the upper forms. In a word, nothing could more seriously disturb me,

(although I scrupulously concealed such disturbance,) than any allusion to a similarity of mind, person, or condition existing between us. But, in truth, I had

no reason to believe that (with the exception of the matter of relationship, and in

the case of Wilson himself,) this similarity had ever been made a subject of comment, or even observed at all by our schoolfellows. That he observed it in all

its bearings, and as fixedly as I, was apparent; but that he could discover in such

circumstances so fruitful a field of annoyance, can only be attributed, as I said before, to his more than ordinary penetration.

His cue, which was to perfect an imitation of myself, lay both in words and in

actions; and most admirably did he play his part. My dress it was an easy matter

to copy; my gait and general manner were, without difficulty, appropriated; in spite of his constitutional defect, even my voice did not escape him. My louder

tones were, of course, unattempted, but then the key, it was identical; and his singular whisper, it grew the very echo of my own.

How greatly this most exquisite portraiture harassed me, (for it could not justly be termed a caricature,) I will not now venture to describe. I had but one

consolation—in the fact that the imitation, apparently, was noticed by myself alone, and that I had to endure only the knowing and strangely sarcastic smiles

of my namesake himself. Satisfied with having produced in my bosom the

intended effect, he seemed to chuckle in secret over the sting he had inflicted, and was characteristically disregardful of the public applause which the success

of his witty endeavours might have so easily elicited. That the school, indeed, did not feel his design, perceive its accomplishment, and participate in his sneer,

was, for many anxious months, a riddle I could not resolve. Perhaps

the

gradation of his copy rendered it not so readily perceptible; or, more possibly, I

owed my security to the master air of the copyist, who, disdaining the letter, (which in a painting is all the obtuse can see,) gave but the full spirit of his original for my individual contemplation and chagrin.

I have already more than once spoken of the disgusting air of patronage which

he assumed toward me, and of his frequent officious interference with my will.

This interference often took the ungracious character of advice; advice not openly given, but hinted or insinuated. I received it with a repugnance which gained strength as I grew in years. Yet, at this distant day, let me do him the simple justice to acknowledge that I can recall no occasion when the suggestions

of my rival were on the side of those errors or follies so usual to his immature age and seeming inexperience; that his moral sense, at least, if not his general talents and worldly wisdom, was far keener than my own; and that I might, to-day, have been a better, and thus a happier man, had I less frequently rejected the

counsels embodied in those meaning whispers which I then but too cordially hated and too bitterly despised.

As it was, I at length grew restive in the extreme under his distasteful supervision, and daily resented more and more openly what I considered his intolerable arrogance. I have said that, in the first years of our connexion as schoolmates, my feelings in regard to him might have been easily ripened into friendship: but, in the latter months of my residence at the academy, although the

intrusion of his ordinary manner had, beyond doubt, in some measure, abated, my sentiments, in nearly similar proportion, partook very much of positive

hatred. Upon one occasion he saw this, I think, and afterwards avoided, or made

a show of avoiding me.

It was about the same period, if I remember aright, that, in an altercation of violence with him, in which he was more than usually thrown off his guard, and

spoke and acted with an openness of demeanor rather foreign to his nature, I discovered, or fancied I discovered, in his accent, his air, and general

appearance, a something which first startled, and then deeply interested me, by

bringing to mind dim visions of my earliest infancy—wild, confused and

thronging memories of a time when memory herself was yet unborn. I cannot better describe the sensation which oppressed me than by saying that I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being

who stood before me, at some epoch very long ago—some point of the past even

infinitely remote. The delusion, however, faded rapidly as it came; and I mention

it at all but to define the day of the last conversation I there held with my singular namesake.

The huge old house, with its countless subdivisions, had several large

chambers communicating with each other, where slept the greater number of the

students. There were, however, (as must necessarily happen in a building so awkwardly planned,) many little nooks or recesses, the odds and ends of the structure; and these the economic ingenuity of Dr. Bransby had also fitted up as

dormitories; although, being the merest closets, they were capable of

accommodating but a single individual. One of these small apartments was

occupied by Wilson.

One night, about the close of my fifth year at the school, and immediately after the altercation just mentioned, finding every one

wrapped in sleep, I arose

from bed, and, lamp in hand, stole through a wilderness of narrow passages from my own bedroom to that of my rival. I had long been plotting one of those ill-natured pieces of practical wit at his expense in which I had hitherto been so uniformly unsuccessful. It was my intention, now, to put my scheme in

operation, and I resolved to make him feel the whole extent of the malice with

which I was imbued. Having reached his closet, I noiselessly entered, leaving the

lamp, with a shade over it, on the outside. I advanced a step, and listened to the

sound of his tranquil breathing. Assured of his being asleep, I returned, took the

light, and with it again approached the bed. Close curtains were around it, which,

in the prosecution of my plan, I slowly and quietly withdrew, when the bright rays fell vividly upon the sleeper, and my eyes, at the same moment, upon his countenance. I looked;—and a numbness, an iciness of feeling instantly

pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit

became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping for breath, I

lowered the lamp in still nearer proximity to the face. Were these—these the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if

with a fit of the ague in fancying they were not. What was there about them to

confound me in this manner? I gazed;—while my brain reeled with a multitude

of incoherent thoughts. Not thus he appeared—assuredly not thus—in the

vivacity of his waking hours. The same name! the same contour of person! the

same day of arrival at the academy! And then his dogged and meaningless

imitation of my gait, my voice, my habits, and my manner! Was it, in truth, within the bounds of human possibility, that what I now saw was the result, merely, of the habitual practice of this sarcastic imitation? Awe-stricken, and with a creeping shudder, I extinguished the lamp, passed silently from the chamber, and left, at once, the halls of that old academy, never to enter them again.

After a lapse of some months, spent at home in mere idleness, I found myself

a student at Eton. The brief interval had been sufficient to enfeeble my

remembrance of the events at Dr. Bransby's, or at least to effect a material change in the nature of the feelings with which I remembered them. The truth—

the tragedy—of the drama was no more. I could now find room to doubt the evidence of my senses; and seldom called up the subject at all but with wonder

at extent of human credulity, and a smile at the vivid force of the imagination which I hereditarily possessed. Neither was this species of scepticism likely to be diminished by the character of the life I led at Eton. The vortex of thoughtless

folly into which I there so immediately and so recklessly plunged, washed away

all but the froth of my past hours, engulfed at once every solid or serious

impression, and left to memory only the veriest levities of a former existence.

I do not wish, however, to trace the course of my miserable profligacy here—a

profligacy which set at defiance the laws, while it eluded the vigilance of the institution. Three years of folly, passed without profit, had but given me rooted

habits of vice, and added, in a somewhat unusual degree, to my bodily stature, when, after a week of soulless dissipation, I invited a small party of the most dissolute students to a secret carousal in my chambers. We met at a late hour of

the night; for our debaucheries were to be faithfully protracted until morning.

The wine flowed freely, and there were not wanting other and perhaps more dangerous seductions; so that the gray dawn had already faintly appeared in the

east, while our delirious extravagance was at its height. Madly flushed with cards and intoxication, I was in the act of insisting upon a toast of more than wonted profanity, when my attention was suddenly diverted by the violent,

although partial unclosing of the door of the apartment, and by the eager voice of

a servant from without. He said that some person, apparently in great haste, demanded to speak with me in the hall.

Wildly excited with wine, the unexpected interruption rather delighted than

surprised me. I staggered forward at once, and a few steps brought me to the vestibule of the building. In this low and small room there hung no lamp; and now no light at all was admitted, save that of the exceedingly feeble dawn which

made its way through the semi-circular window. As I put my foot over the threshold, I became aware of the figure of a youth about my own height, and habited in a white kerseymere morning frock, cut in the novel fashion of the one

I myself wore at the moment. This the faint light enabled me to perceive; but the

features of his face I could not distinguish. Upon my entering he strode hurriedly

up to me, and, seizing me by the arm with a gesture of petulant impatience, whispered the words “William Wilson!” in my ear.

I grew perfectly sober in an instant. There was that in the manner of

the stranger, and in the tremulous shake of his uplifted finger, as he held it between

my eyes and the light, which filled me with unqualified amazement; but it was

not this which had so violently moved me. It was the pregnancy of solemn admonition in the singular, low, hissing utterance; and, above all, it was the character, the tone, the key, of those few, simple, and familiar, yet whispered syllables, which came with a thousand thronging memories of bygone days, and

struck upon my soul with the shock of a galvanic battery. Ere I could recover the

use of my senses he was gone.

Although this event failed not of a vivid effect upon my disordered

imagination, yet was it evanescent as vivid. For some weeks, indeed, I busied

myself in earnest inquiry, or was wrapped in a cloud of morbid speculation. I did not pretend to disguise from my perception the identity of the singular individual

who thus perseveringly interfered with my affairs, and harassed me with his insinuated counsel. But who and what was this Wilson?—and whence came he?

—and what were his purposes? Upon neither of these points could I be satisfied;

merely ascertaining, in regard to him, that a sudden accident in his family had caused his removal from Dr. Bransby's academy on the afternoon of the day in

which I myself had eloped. But in a brief period I ceased to think upon the subject; my attention being all absorbed in a contemplated departure for Oxford.

Thither I soon went; the uncalculating vanity of my parents furnishing me with

an outfit and annual establishment, which would enable me to indulge at will in

the luxury already so dear to my heart,—to vie in profuseness of expenditure with the haughtiest heirs of the wealthiest earldoms in Great Britain.

Excited by such appliances to vice, my constitutional temperament broke forth

with redoubled ardor, and I spurned even the common restraints of decency in the mad infatuation of my revels. But it were absurd to pause in the detail of my

extravagance. Let it suffice, that among spendthrifts I out-Heroded Herod, and that, giving name to a multitude of novel follies, I added no brief appendix to the

long catalogue of vices then usual in the most dissolute university of Europe.

It could hardly be credited, however, that I had, even here, so utterly fallen from the gentlemanly estate, as to seek acquaintance with the vilest arts of the gambler by profession, and, having become an adept in his despicable science, to

practise it habitually as a means of increasing my already enormous income at the expense of the weak-minded among my fellow-collegians. Such,

nevertheless, was the fact. And the very enormity of this offence against all manly and honourable sentiment proved, beyond doubt, the main if not the sole

reason of the impunity with which it was committed. Who, indeed, among my most abandoned associates, would not rather have disputed the clearest evidence

of his senses, than have suspected of such courses, the gay, the frank, the generous William Wilson—the noblest and most liberal commoner at Oxford—

him whose follies (said his parasites) were but the follies of youth and unbridled

fancy—whose errors but inimitable whim—whose darkest vice but a careless

and dashing extravagance?

I had been now two years successfully busied in this way, when there came to

the university a young parvenu nobleman, Glendinning—rich, said report, as

Herodes Atticus—his riches, too, as easily acquired. I soon found him of weak

intellect, and, of course, marked him as a fitting subject for my skill. I frequently engaged him in play, and contrived, with the gambler's usual art, to let him win

considerable sums, the more effectually to entangle him in my snares. At length, my schemes being ripe, I met him (with the full intention that this meeting should be final and decisive) at the chambers of a fellow-commoner, (Mr.

Preston,) equally intimate with both, but who, to do him Justice, entertained not

even a remote suspicion of my design. To give to this a better colouring, I had

contrived to have assembled a party of some eight or ten, and was solicitously careful that the introduction of cards should appear accidental, and originate in

the proposal of my contemplated dupe himself. To be brief upon a vile topic, none of the low finesse was omitted, so customary upon similar occasions that it

is a just matter for wonder how any are still found so besotted as to fall its victim.

We had protracted our sitting far into the night, and I had at length effected the

manoeuvre of getting Glendinning as my sole antagonist. The game, too, was my

favorite ecarte! The rest of the company, interested in the extent of our play, had

abandoned their own cards, and were standing around us as spectators. The

parvenu, who had been induced by my artifices in the early part of the evening,

to drink deeply, now shuffled, dealt, or played, with a wild nervousness of manner for which his intoxication, I thought, might partially, but could not altogether account. In a very short period he had become my debtor to a large amount, when, having taken a long draught of port, he did precisely what I had

been coolly anticipating—he proposed to double our already extravagant stakes.

With a well-feigned show of reluctance, and not until after my repeated refusal

had seduced him into some angry words which gave a color of pique to my compliance, did I finally comply. The result, of course, did but prove how entirely the prey was in my toils; in less than an hour he had quadrupled his debt.

For some time his countenance had been losing the florid tinge lent it by the wine; but now, to my astonishment, I perceived that it had grown to a pallor truly

fearful. I say to my astonishment. Glendinning had been represented to my eager

inquiries as immeasurably wealthy; and the sums which he had as yet lost, although in themselves vast, could not, I supposed, very seriously annoy, much

less so violently affect him. That he was overcome by the wine just swallowed,

was the idea which most readily presented itself; and, rather with a view to the

preservation of my own character in the eyes of my associates, than from any less interested motive, I was about to insist, peremptorily, upon a discontinuance

of the play, when some expressions at my elbow from among the company, and

an ejaculation evincing utter despair on the part of Glendinning, gave me to understand that I had effected his total ruin under

circumstances which,

rendering him an object for the pity of all, should have protected him from the ill

offices even of a fiend.

What now might have been my conduct it is difficult to say. The pitiable condition of my dupe had thrown an air of embarrassed gloom over all; and, for

some moments, a profound silence was maintained, during which I could not

help feeling my cheeks tingle with the many burning glances of scorn or

reproach cast upon me by the less abandoned of the party. I will even own that

an intolerable weight of anxiety was for a brief instant lifted from my bosom by

the sudden and extraordinary interruption which ensued. The wide, heavy

folding doors of the apartment were all at once thrown open, to their full extent,

with a vigorous and rushing impetuosity that extinguished, as if by magic, every

candle in the room. Their light, in dying, enabled us just to perceive that a stranger had entered, about my own height, and closely muffled in a cloak. The

darkness, however, was now total; and we could only feel that he was standing in

our midst. Before any one of us could recover from the extreme astonishment into which this rudeness had thrown all, we heard the voice of the intruder.

“Gentlemen,” he said, in a low, distinct, and never-to-be-forgotten whisper

which thrilled to the very marrow of my bones, “Gentlemen, I make

no apology

for this behaviour, because in thus behaving, I am but fulfilling a duty. You are,

beyond doubt, uninformed of the true character of the person who has to-night won at ecarte a large sum of money from Lord Glendinning. I will therefore put

you upon an expeditious and decisive plan of obtaining this very necessary information. Please to examine, at your leisure, the inner linings of the cuff of his left sleeve, and the several little packages which may be found in the somewhat capacious pockets of his embroidered morning wrapper."

While he spoke, so profound was the stillness that one might have heard a pin

drop upon the floor. In ceasing, he departed at once, and as abruptly as he had entered. Can I—shall I describe my sensations?—must I say that I felt all the horrors of the damned? Most assuredly I had little time given for reflection.

Many hands roughly seized me upon the spot, and lights were immediately

reprocured. A search ensued. In the lining of my sleeve were found all the court

cards essential in ecarte, and, in the pockets of my wrapper, a number of packs,

facsimiles of those used at our sittings, with the single exception that mine were

of the species called, technically, arrondees; the honours being slightly convex at

the ends, the lower cards slightly convex at the sides. In this disposition, the dupe who cuts, as customary, at the length of the pack, will invariably find that

he cuts his antagonist an honor; while the gambler, cutting at the breadth, will, as

certainly, cut nothing for his victim which may count in the records of

the game.

Any burst of indignation upon this discovery would have affected me less than

the silent contempt, or the sarcastic composure, with which it was received.

“Mr. Wilson,” said our host, stooping to remove from beneath his feet an

exceedingly luxurious cloak of rare furs, “Mr. Wilson, this is your property.”

(The weather was cold; and, upon quitting my own room, I had thrown a cloak

over my dressing wrapper, putting it off upon reaching the scene of play.) “I presume it is supererogatory to seek here (eyeing the folds of the garment with a

bitter smile) for any farther evidence of your skill. Indeed, we have had enough.

You will see the necessity, I hope, of quitting Oxford—at all events, of quitting

instantly my chambers.”

Abased, humbled to the dust as I then was, it is probable that I should have resented this galling language by immediate personal violence, had not my

whole attention been at the moment arrested by a fact of the most startling character. The cloak which I had worn was of a rare description of fur; how rare,

how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my

own fantastic invention; for I was fastidious to an absurd degree of coxcombry,

in matters of this frivolous nature. When, therefore, Mr. Preston reached me that

which he had picked up upon the floor, and near the folding doors of

the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm, (where I had no doubt

unwittingly placed it,) and that the one presented me was but its exact

counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular. The singular being

who had so disastrously exposed me, had been muffled, I remembered, in a

cloak; and none had been worn at all by any of the members of our party with

the exception of myself. Retaining some presence of mind, I took the one offered

me by Preston; placed it, unnoticed, over my own; left the apartment with a resolute scowl of defiance; and, next morning ere dawn of day, commenced a hurried journey from Oxford to the continent, in a perfect agony of horror and of

shame.

I fled in vain. My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation, and proved, indeed, that the exercise of its mysterious dominion had as yet only begun.

Scarcely had I set foot in Paris ere I had fresh evidence of the detestable interest

taken by this Wilson in my concerns. Years flew, while I experienced no relief.

Villain!—at Rome, with how untimely, yet with how spectral an officiousness, stepped he in between me and my ambition! At Vienna, too—at Berlin—and at

Moscow! Where, in truth, had I not bitter cause to curse him within my heart?

From his inscrutable tyranny did I at length flee, panic-stricken, as from a pestilence; and to the very ends of the earth I fled in vain.

And again, and again, in secret communion with my own spirit, would I

demand the questions “Who is he?—whence came he?—and what are his objects?” But no answer was there found. And then I scrutinized, with a minute

scrutiny, the forms, and the methods, and the leading traits of his impertinent supervision. But even here there was very little upon which to base a conjecture.

It was noticeable, indeed, that, in no one of the multiplied instances in which he

had of late crossed my path, had he so crossed it except to frustrate those schemes, or to disturb those actions, which, if fully carried out, might have resulted in bitter mischief. Poor justification this, in truth, for an authority so imperiously assumed! Poor indemnity for natural rights of self-agency so

pertinaciously, so insultingly denied!

I had also been forced to notice that my tormentor, for a very long period of

time, (while scrupulously and with miraculous dexterity maintaining his whim of

an identity of apparel with myself,) had so contrived it, in the execution of his varied interference with my will, that I saw not, at any moment, the features of

his face. Be Wilson what he might, this, at least, was but the veriest of affectation, or of folly. Could he, for an instant, have supposed that, in my admonisher at Eton—in the destroyer of my honor at Oxford,—in him who

thwarted my ambition at Rome, my revenge at Paris, my passionate love at

Naples, or what he falsely termed my avarice in Egypt,—that in this, my arch-

enemy and evil genius, could fail to recognise the William Wilson of my school

boy days,—the namesake, the companion, the rival,—the hated and dreaded

rival at Dr. Bransby's? Impossible!—But let me hasten to the last eventful scene

of the drama.

Thus far I had succumbed supinely to this imperious domination. The

sentiment of deep awe with which I habitually regarded the elevated character, the majestic wisdom, the apparent omnipresence and omnipotence of Wilson,

added to a feeling of even terror, with which certain other traits in his nature and

assumptions inspired me, had operated, hitherto, to impress me with an idea of

my own utter weakness and helplessness, and to suggest an implicit, although bitterly reluctant submission to his arbitrary will. But, of late days, I had given

myself up entirely to wine; and its maddening influence upon my hereditary temper rendered me more and more impatient of control. I began to murmur,—to

hesitate,—to resist. And was it only fancy which induced me to believe that, with the increase of my own firmness, that of my tormentor underwent a

proportional diminution? Be this as it may, I now began to feel the inspiration of

a burning hope, and at length nurtured in my secret thoughts a stern and desperate resolution that I would submit no longer to be enslaved.

It was at Rome, during the Carnival of 18—, that I attended a masquerade in

the palazzo of the Neapolitan Duke Di Broglio. I had indulged more freely than usual in the excesses of the wine-table; and now the suffocating atmosphere of

the crowded rooms irritated me beyond endurance. The difficulty, too, of forcing

my way through the mazes of the company contributed not a little to the ruffling

of my temper; for I was anxiously seeking, (let me not say with what unworthy

motive) the young, the gay, the beautiful wife of the aged and doting Di Broglio.

With a too unscrupulous confidence she had previously communicated to me the

secret of the costume in which she would be habited, and now, having caught a

glimpse of her person, I was hurrying to make my way into her presence.—At this moment I felt a light hand placed upon my shoulder, and that ever-remembered, low, damnable whisper within my ear.

In an absolute phrenzy of wrath, I turned at once upon him who had thus interrupted me, and seized him violently by the collar. He was attired, as I had

expected, in a costume altogether similar to my own; wearing a Spanish cloak of

blue velvet, begirt about the waist with a crimson belt sustaining a rapier. A mask of black silk entirely covered his face.

“Scoundrel!” I said, in a voice husky with rage, while every syllable I uttered

seemed as new fuel to my fury, “scoundrel! impostor! accursed villain! you shall

not—you shall not dog me unto death! Follow me, or I stab you where you stand!”—and I broke my way from the ball-room into a small ante-chamber

adjoining—dragging him unresistingly with me as I went.

Upon entering, I thrust him furiously from me. He staggered against the wall,

while I closed the door with an oath, and commanded him to draw. He hesitated

but for an instant; then, with a slight sigh, drew in silence, and put himself upon

his defence.

The contest was brief indeed. I was frantic with every species of wild

excitement, and felt within my single arm the energy and power of a multitude.

In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscoting, and thus, getting him at mercy, plunged my sword, with brute ferocity, repeatedly through and through his bosom.

At that instant some person tried the latch of the door. I hastened to prevent an

intrusion, and then immediately returned to my dying antagonist. But what

human language can adequately portray that astonishment, that horror which

possessed me at the spectacle then presented to view? The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangements at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror,—so at first it seemed to me in my confusion—now stood where none had

been perceptible before; and, as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine

own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, advanced to meet me with a feeble and tottering gait.

Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was my antagonist—it was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of his dissolution. His mask and cloak

lay, where he had thrown them, upon the floor. Not a thread in all his raiment—

not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face which was not,

even in the most absolute identity, mine own!

It was Wilson; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied

that I myself was speaking while he said:

“You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead—dead

to the World, to Heaven and to Hope! In me didst thou exist—and, in my death,

see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself.”

THE TELL-TALE HEART.

TRUE!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why

will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not

destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then,

am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the

whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived,

it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For

his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take

the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you

should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what

caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was

never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And

every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so

gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a

dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my

head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it

slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took

me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this? And

then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so

cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—

every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil

Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in

upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A

watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night

had I felt the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain

my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled

at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as

pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear

of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I

kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped

upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out —"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle,

and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the

bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It

was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that

arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound

well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has

welled up

from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that

distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him,

although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the

first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since

growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not.

He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is

only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these

suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped

the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to feel the presence of

my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I

resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it

—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length a simple dim

ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it.

I saw it

with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled

the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face

or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned

spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-

acuteness of the sense?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well,

too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating

of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern

motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eve. Meantime

the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder

and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew

louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well I have told you that I

am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful

silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable

terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the

beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had

come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the

heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man

was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone

dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise

precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the

head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all

between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that

no human eye—not even his—could have detected any thing wrong. There was

nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been

too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door.

I went down to open it with a light heart,—for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers

of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion

of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office,

and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled,—for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I

said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search well. I

led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room,

and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath

which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly

at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things.

But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached,

and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:—It continued and became more distinct: I talked more

freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness —until, at

length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew *very* pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a low,

dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in

cotton. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued

about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily

increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy

strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed—I raved —I swore! I

swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but

the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—

louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!

—they were making a mockery of my horror!-this I thought, and this I think. But

anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this

derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the

planks! here, here!—It is the beating of his hideous heart!”

BERENICE

Dicebant mihi sodales, si sepulchrum amicae visitarem, curas

meas aliquantulum forelevatas.

— *Ebn Zaiat.*

MISERY is manifold. The wretchedness of earth is multiform. Overreaching

the wide horizon as the rainbow, its hues are as various as the hues of that arch—

as distinct too, yet as intimately blended. Overreaching the wide horizon as the

rainbow! How is it that from beauty I have derived a type of unloveliness?—

from the covenant of peace, a simile of sorrow? But as, in ethics, evil is a consequence of good, so, in fact, out of joy is sorrow born. Either the memory of

past bliss is the anguish of to-day, or the agonies which *are*, have their origin in the ecstasies which *might have been*.

My baptismal name is Egaeus; that of my family I will not mention. Yet there

are no towers in the land more time-honored than my gloomy, gray, hereditary halls. Our line has been called a race of visionaries; and in many striking particulars—in the character of the family mansion—in the frescos of the chief

saloon—in the tapestries of the dormitories—in the chiselling of some buttresses

in the armory—but more especially in the gallery of antique paintings —in the fashion of the library chamber—and, lastly, in the very peculiar nature of the library's contents—there is more than sufficient evidence to warrant the belief.

The recollections of my earliest years are connected with that chamber, and with its volumes—of which latter I will say no more. Here died my mother.

Herein was I born. But it is mere idleness to say that I had not lived before—that

the soul has no previous existence. You deny it?—let us not argue the matter.

Convinced myself, I seek not to convince. There is, however, a remembrance of

aerial forms—of spiritual and meaning eyes—of sounds, musical yet sad—a

remembrance which will not be excluded; a memory like a shadow—vague,

variable, indefinite, unsteady; and like a shadow, too, in the impossibility of my

getting rid of it while the sunlight of my reason shall exist.

In that chamber was I born. Thus awaking from the long night of what

seemed, but was not, nonentity, at once into the very regions of fairy land—into

a palace of imagination—into the wild dominions of monastic thought and

erudition—it is not singular that I gazed around me with a startled and ardent eye

—that I loitered away my boyhood in books, and dissipated my youth in reverie;

but it *is* singular that as years rolled away, and the noon of manhood found me

still in the mansion of my fathers—it *is* wonderful what stagnation there fell upon the springs of my life—wonderful how total an inversion took place in the

character of my commonest thought. The realities of the world affected me as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became,

in turn, not the material of my every-day existence, but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself.

Berenice and I were cousins, and we grew up together in my paternal halls.

Yet differently we grew—I, ill of health, and buried in gloom—she, agile,

graceful, and overflowing with energy; hers, the ramble on the hill-side—mine the studies of the cloister; I, living within my own heart, and addicted, body and

soul, to the most intense and painful meditation—she, roaming carelessly

through life, with no thought of the shadows in her path, or the silent flight of the raven-winged hours. Berenice!—I call upon her name—Berenice!—and from

the gray ruins of memory a thousand tumultuous recollections are startled at the

sound! Ah, vividly is her image before me now, as in the early days of her light-

heartedness and joy! Oh, gorgeous yet fantastic beauty! Oh, sylph amid the shrubberies of Arnheim! Oh, Naiad among its fountains! And then—then all is

mystery and terror, and a tale which should not be told. Disease—a fatal disease,

fell like the simoon upon her frame; and, even while I gazed upon her, the spirit

of change swept over her, pervading her mind, her habits, and her character, and,

in a manner the most subtle and terrible, disturbing even the identity of her person! Alas! the destroyer came and went!—and the victim—where is she? I

knew her not—or knew her no longer as Berenice.

Among the numerous train of maladies superinduced by that fatal and primary

one which effected a revolution of so horrible a kind in the moral and physical

being of my cousin, may be mentioned as the most distressing and obstinate in

its nature, a species of epilepsy not unfrequently terminating in *trance* itself—

trance very nearly resembling positive dissolution, and from which her manner

of recovery was in most instances, startlingly abrupt. In the mean time my own

disease—for I have been told that I should call it by no other appellation—my own disease, then, grew rapidly upon me, and assumed finally a monomaniac

character of a novel and extraordinary form—hourly and momently gaining

vigor—and at length obtaining over me the most incomprehensible ascendancy.

This monomania, if I must so term it, consisted in a morbid irritability of those

properties of the mind in metaphysical science termed the *attentive*. It is more than probable that I am not understood; but I fear, indeed, that it is in no manner

possible to convey to the mind of the merely general reader, an adequate idea of

that nervous *intensity of interest* with which, in my case, the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and buried themselves, in the

contemplation of even the most ordinary objects of the universe.

To muse for long unwearied hours, with my attention riveted to some

frivolous device on the margin, or in the typography of a book; to become absorbed, for the better part of a summer's day, in a quaint shadow falling aslant

upon the tapestry or upon the floor; to lose myself, for an entire night, in watching the steady flame of a lamp, or the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days over the perfume of a flower; to repeat, monotonously, some

common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased

to convey

any idea whatever to the mind; to lose all sense of motion or physical existence,

by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and obstinately persevered in: such

were a few of the most common and least pernicious vagaries induced by a condition of the mental faculties, not, indeed, altogether unparalleled, but certainly bidding defiance to anything like analysis or explanation.

Yet let me not be misapprehended. The undue, earnest, and morbid attention

thus excited by objects in their own nature frivolous, must not be confounded in

character with that ruminating propensity common to all mankind, and more

especially indulged in by persons of ardent imagination. It was not even, as might be at first supposed, an extreme condition, or exaggeration of such

propensity, but primarily and essentially distinct and different. In the one instance, the dreamer, or enthusiast, being interested by an object usually *not* frivolous, imperceptibly loses sight of this object in a wilderness of deductions

and suggestions issuing therefrom, until, at the conclusion of a day dream *often*

replete with luxury, he finds the *incitamentum*, or first cause of his musings, entirely vanished and forgotten. In my case, the primary object was *invariably frivolous*, although assuming, through the medium of my distempered vision, a

refracted and unreal importance. Few deductions, if any, were made; and those

few pertinaciously returning in upon the original object as a centre. The

meditations were *never* pleasurable; and, at the termination of the

reverie, the first cause, so far from being out of sight, had attained that supernaturally exaggerated interest which was the prevailing feature of the disease. In a word,

the powers of mind more particularly exercised were, with me, as I have said before, the *attentive*, and are, with the day-dreamer, the *speculative*.

My books, at this epoch, if they did not actually serve to irritate the disorder,

partook, it will be perceived, largely, in their imaginative and inconsequential nature, of the characteristic qualities of the disorder itself. I well remember, among others, the treatise of the noble Italian, Coelius Secundus Curio, "*De*

Amplitudine Beati Regni Dei; " St. Austin's great work, the "City of God;" and Tertullian's "*De Carne Christi*," in which the paradoxical sentence "*Mortuus est Dei filius; credible est quia ineptum est: et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile est,* " occupied my undivided time, for many weeks of laborious and fruitless investigation.

Thus it will appear that, shaken from its balance only by trivial things, my reason bore resemblance to that ocean-crag spoken of by Ptolemy Hephestion, which steadily resisting the attacks of human violence, and the fiercer fury of the

waters and the winds, trembled only to the touch of the flower called Asphodel.

And although, to a careless thinker, it might appear a matter beyond doubt, that

the alteration produced by her unhappy malady, in the *moral* condition of Berenice, would afford me many objects for the exercise of that intense and abnormal meditation whose nature I have been at some trouble in explaining, yet

such was not in any degree the case. In the lucid intervals of my infirmity, her

calamity, indeed, gave me pain, and, taking deeply to heart that total wreck of her fair and gentle life, I did not fail to ponder, frequently and bitterly, upon the wonder-working means by which so strange a revolution had been so suddenly

brought to pass. But these reflections partook not of the idiosyncrasy of my disease, and were such as would have occurred, under similar circumstances, to

the ordinary mass of mankind. True to its own character, my disorder revelled in

the less important but more startling changes wrought in the *physical* frame of Berenice—in the singular and most appalling distortion of her personal identity.

During the brightest days of her unparalleled beauty, most surely I had never

loved her. In the strange anomaly of my existence, feelings with me, *had never*

been of the heart, and my passions *always were* of the mind. Through the gray of the early morning—among the trellised shadows of the forest at noonday—and

in the silence of my library at night—she had flitted by my eyes, and I had seen

her—not as the living and breathing Berenice, but as the Berenice of a dream; not as a being of the earth, earthy, but as the abstraction of such a being; not as a thing to admire, but to analyze; not as an object of love, but as the theme of the

most abstruse although desultory speculation. And *now*—now I shuddered in her

presence, and grew pale at her approach; yet, bitterly lamenting her fallen and desolate condition, I called to mind that she had loved me long, and, in an evil

moment, I spoke to her of marriage.

And at length the period of our nuptials was approaching, when, upon an

afternoon in the winter of the year—one of those unseasonably warm, calm, and

misty days which are the nurse of the beautiful Halcyon (*1),—I sat, (and sat, as

I thought, alone,) in the inner apartment of the library. But, uplifting my eyes, I

saw that Berenice stood before me.

Was it my own excited imagination—or the misty influence of the atmosphere

—or the uncertain twilight of the chamber—or the gray draperies which fell around her figure—that caused in it so vacillating and indistinct an outline? I could not tell. She spoke no word; and I—not for worlds could I have uttered a

syllable. An icy chill ran through my frame; a sense of insufferable anxiety oppressed me; a consuming curiosity pervaded my soul; and sinking back upon

the chair, I remained for some time breathless and motionless, with my eyes riveted upon her person. Alas! its emaciation was excessive, and not one vestige

of the former being lurked in any single line of the contour. My burning glances

at length fell upon the face.

The forehead was high, and very pale, and singularly placid; and the once jetty hair fell partially over it, and overshadowed the hollow temples with innumerable ringlets, now of a vivid yellow, and jarring discordantly, in their fantastic character, with the reigning melancholy of the countenance. The eyes were lifeless, and lustreless, and seemingly pupilless, and I shrank involuntarily

from their glassy stare to the contemplation of the thin and shrunken lips. They

parted; and in a smile of peculiar meaning, *the teeth* of the changed Berenice disclosed themselves slowly to my view. Would to God that I had never beheld

them, or that, having done so, I had died!

The shutting of a door disturbed me, and, looking up, I found that my cousin

had departed from the chamber. But from the disordered chamber of

my brain, had not, alas! departed, and would not be driven away, the white and ghastly *spectrum* of the teeth. Not a speck on their surface—not a shade on their enamel

—not an indenture in their edges—but what that period of her smile had sufficed

to brand in upon my memory. I saw them *now* even more unequivocally than I

beheld them *then*. The teeth!—the teeth!—they were here, and there, and everywhere, and visibly and palpably before me; long, narrow, and excessively

white, with the pale lips writhing about them, as in the very moment of their first

terrible development. Then came the full fury of my *monomania*, and I struggled in vain against its strange and irresistible influence. In the multiplied objects of

the external world I had no thoughts but for the teeth. For these I longed with a

phrenzied desire. All other matters and all different interests became absorbed in

their single contemplation. They—they alone were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life. I held

them in every light. I turned them in every attitude. I surveyed their

characteristics. I dwelt upon their peculiarities. I pondered upon their

conformation. I mused upon the alteration in their nature. I shuddered as I assigned to them in imagination a sensitive and sentient power, and even when

unassisted by the lips, a capability of moral expression. Of Mademoiselle Salle it

has been well said, "*Que tous ses pas etaient des sentiments*," and of Berenice I more seriously believed *que toutes ses dents etaient des idees*. *Des idees!* —ah here was the idiotic thought that destroyed me! *Des idees!* —ah *therefore* it was that I coveted them so madly! I felt that

their possession could alone ever restore

me to peace, in giving me back to reason.

And the evening closed in upon me thus—and then the darkness came, and

tarried, and went—and the day again dawned—and the mists of a second night

were now gathering around—and still I sat motionless in that solitary room—

and still I sat buried in meditation—and still the *phantasma* of the teeth maintained its terrible ascendancy, as, with the most vivid hideous distinctness, it

floated about amid the changing lights and shadows of the chamber. At length there broke in upon my dreams a cry as of horror and dismay; and thereunto, after a pause, succeeded the sound of troubled voices, intermingled with many low moanings of sorrow or of pain. I arose from my seat, and throwing open one

of the doors of the library, saw standing out in the ante-chamber a servant maiden, all in tears, who told me that Berenice was—no more! She had been seized with epilepsy in the early morning, and now, at the closing in of the night,

the grave was ready for its tenant, and all the preparations for the burial were completed.

I found myself sitting in the library, and again sitting there alone. It seemed that I had newly awakened from a confused and exciting dream. I knew that it was now midnight, and I was well aware, that since the setting of the sun, Berenice had been interred. But of that dreary period which intervened I had no

positive, at least no definite comprehension. Yet its memory was replete with horror—horror more horrible from being vague, and terror more terrible from ambiguity. It was a fearful page in the record my existence, written all over with

dim, and hideous, and unintelligible recollections. I strived to decypher them, but in vain; while ever and anon, like the spirit of a departed sound, the shrill and piercing shriek of a female voice seemed to be ringing in my ears. I had done a

deed—what was it? I asked myself the question aloud, and the whispering

echoes of the chamber answered me,—"*what was it? "*

On the table beside me burned a lamp, and near it lay a little box. It was of no

remarkable character, and I had seen it frequently before, for it was the property

of the family physician; but how came it *there*, upon my table, and why did I

shudder in regarding it? These things were in no manner to be accounted for, and my eyes at length dropped to the open pages of a book, and to a sentence underscored therein. The words were the singular but simple ones of the poet Ebn Zaiat:—"*Dicebant mihi sodales si sepulchrum amicae visitarem, curas*

meas aliquantulum fore levatas." Why then, as I perused them, did the hairs of my head erect themselves on end, and the blood of my body become congealed

within my veins?

There came a light tap at the library door—and, pale as the tenant of a tomb, a

menial entered upon tiptoe. His looks were wild with terror, and he spoke to me

in a voice tremulous, husky, and very low. What said he?—some broken

sentences I heard. He told of a wild cry disturbing the silence of the night—of the gathering together of the household—of a search in the direction of the sound; and then his tones grew thrillingly distinct as he whispered me of a violated grave—of a disfigured body enshrouded, yet still breathing—still

palpitating— *still alive*!

He pointed to garments;—they were muddy and clotted with gore. I spoke not,

and he took me gently by the hand: it was indented with the impress

of human

nails. He directed my attention to some object against the wall. I looked at it for

some minutes: it was a spade. With a shriek I bounded to the table, and grasped

the box that lay upon it. But I could not force it open; and in my tremor, it slipped from my hands, and fell heavily, and burst into pieces; and from it, with

a rattling sound, there rolled out some instruments of dental surgery,

intermingled with thirty-two small, white and ivory-looking substances that were

scattered to and fro about the floor.

ELEONORA

Sub conservatione formae specificae salva anima.

Raymond Lully.

I AM come of a race noted for vigor of fancy and ardor of passion. Men have

called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not

the loftiest intelligence—whether much that is glorious—whether all that is

profound—does not spring from disease of thought—from moods of mind

exalted at the expense of the general intellect. They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their

gray visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill, in awakening, to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret. In snatches, they learn something of the wisdom which is of good, and more of the mere knowledge which is of evil. They penetrate, however, rudderless or compassless into the vast ocean of the “light ineffable,” and again, like the adventures of the Nubian

geographer, “agressi sunt mare tenebrarum, quid in eo esset exploraturi.”

We will say, then, that I am mad. I grant, at least, that there are two distinct conditions of my mental existence—the condition of a lucid reason, not to be disputed, and belonging to the memory of events forming the first epoch of my

life—and a condition of shadow and doubt, appertaining to the present, and to the recollection of what constitutes the second great era of my being. Therefore,

what I shall tell of the earlier period, believe; and to what I may relate of the later time, give only such credit as may seem due, or doubt it altogether, or, if doubt it ye cannot, then play unto its riddle the Oedipus.

She whom I loved in youth, and of whom I now pen calmly and distinctly

these remembrances, was the sole daughter of the only sister of my mother long

departed. Eleonora was the name of my cousin. We had always dwelled together,

beneath a tropical sun, in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. No unguided footstep ever came upon that vale; for it lay away up among a range of giant hills

that hung beetling around about it, shutting out the sunlight from its sweetest recesses. No path was trodden in its vicinity; and, to reach our happy home, there was need of putting back, with force, the foliage of many thousands of forest trees, and of crushing to death the glories of many millions of fragrant flowers. Thus it was that we lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley—I, and my cousin, and her mother.

From the dim regions beyond the mountains at the upper end of our encircled domain, there crept out a narrow and deep river, brighter than all save the eyes of

Eleonora; and, winding stealthily about in mazy courses, it passed away, at length, through a shadowy gorge, among hills still dimmer than those whence it

had issued. We called it the “River of Silence”; for there seemed to be a hushing

influence in its flow. No murmur arose from its bed, and so gently it wandered

along, that the pearly pebbles upon which we loved to gaze, far down within its

bosom, stirred not at all, but lay in a motionless content, each in its own old station, shining on gloriously forever.

The margin of the river, and of the many dazzling rivulets that glided through

devious ways into its channel, as well as the spaces that extended from the margins away down into the depths of the streams until they reached the bed of

pebbles at the bottom,—these spots, not less than the whole surface of the valley,

from the river to the mountains that girdled it in, were carpeted all by a soft green grass, thick, short, perfectly even, and vanilla-perfumed, but so

besprinkled throughout with the yellow buttercup, the white daisy, the purple violet, and the ruby-red asphodel, that its exceeding beauty spoke to our hearts in

loud tones, of the love and of the glory of God.

And, here and there, in groves about this grass, like wildernesses of dreams, sprang up fantastic trees, whose tall slender stems stood not upright, but slanted

gracefully toward the light that peered at noon-day into the centre of the valley.

Their mark was speckled with the vivid alternate splendor of ebony and silver, and was smoother than all save the cheeks of Eleonora; so that, but for the brilliant green of the huge leaves that spread from their summits in long, tremulous lines, dallying with the Zephyrs, one might have fancied them giant serpents of Syria doing homage to their sovereign the Sun.

Hand in hand about this valley, for fifteen years, roamed I with Eleonora before Love entered within our hearts. It was one evening at the close of the third lustrum of her life, and of the fourth of my own, that we sat, locked in each

other's embrace, beneath the serpent-like trees, and looked down within the water of the River of Silence at our images therein. We spoke no words during

the rest of that sweet day, and our words even upon the morrow were tremulous

and few. We had drawn the God Eros from that wave, and now we felt that he

had enkindled within us the fiery souls of our forefathers. The passions which had for centuries distinguished our race, came thronging with the fancies for which they had been equally noted, and together breathed a delirious bliss over

the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. A change fell upon all things. Strange, brilliant flowers, star-shaped, burn out upon the trees where no flowers had been

known before. The tints of the green carpet deepened; and when, one by one, the white daisies shrank away, there sprang up in place of them, ten by ten of the ruby-red asphodel. And life arose in our paths; for the tall flamingo, hitherto unseen, with all gay glowing birds, flaunted his scarlet plumage before us. The

golden and silver fish haunted the river, out of the bosom of which issued, little

by little, a murmur that swelled, at length, into a lulling melody more divine than

that of the harp of Aeolus-sweeter than all save the voice of Eleonora. And now,

too, a voluminous cloud, which we had long watched in the regions of Hesper,

floated out thence, all gorgeous in crimson and gold, and settling in peace above

us, sank, day by day, lower and lower, until its edges rested upon the

tops of the

mountains, turning all their dimness into magnificence, and shutting us up, as if

forever, within a magic prison-house of grandeur and of glory.

The loveliness of Eleonora was that of the Seraphim; but she was a maiden artless and innocent as the brief life she had led among the flowers. No guile disguised the fervor of love which animated her heart, and she examined with me its inmost recesses as we walked together in the Valley of the Many-Colored

Grass, and discoursed of the mighty changes which had lately taken place

therein.

At length, having spoken one day, in tears, of the last sad change which must

befall Humanity, she thenceforward dwelt only upon this one sorrowful theme, interweaving it into all our converse, as, in the songs of the bard of Schiraz, the

same images are found occurring, again and again, in every impressive variation

of phrase.

She had seen that the finger of Death was upon her bosom—that, like the

ephemeron, she had been made perfect in loveliness only to die; but the terrors

of the grave to her lay solely in a consideration which she revealed to me, one

evening at twilight, by the banks of the River of Silence. She grieved to think that, having entombed her in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass, I would quit

forever its happy recesses, transferring the love which now was so passionately

her own to some maiden of the outer and everyday world. And, then

and there, I

threw myself hurriedly at the feet of Eleonora, and offered up a vow, to herself

and to Heaven, that I would never bind myself in marriage to any daughter of Earth—that I would in no manner prove recreant to her dear memory, or to the

memory of the devout affection with which she had blessed me. And I called the

Mighty Ruler of the Universe to witness the pious solemnity of my vow. And the

curse which I invoked of Him and of her, a saint in Helusion should I prove traitorous to that promise, involved a penalty the exceeding great horror of which will not permit me to make record of it here. And the bright eyes of

Eleonora grew brighter at my words; and she sighed as if a deadly burthen had been taken from her breast; and she trembled and very bitterly wept; but she made acceptance of the vow, (for what was she but a child?) and it made easy to

her the bed of her death. And she said to me, not many days afterward, tranquilly

dying, that, because of what I had done for the comfort of her spirit she would

watch over me in that spirit when departed, and, if so it were permitted her return to me visibly in the watches of the night; but, if this thing were, indeed,

beyond the power of the souls in Paradise, that she would, at least, give me frequent indications of her presence, sighing upon me in the evening winds, or filling the air which I breathed with perfume from the censers of the angels. And,

with these words upon her lips, she yielded up her innocent life, putting an end

to the first epoch of my own.

Thus far I have faithfully said. But as I pass the barrier in Time's path,

formed

by the death of my beloved, and proceed with the second era of my existence, I

feel that a shadow gathers over my brain, and I mistrust the perfect sanity of the

record. But let me on.—Years dragged themselves along heavily, and still I dwelled within the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass; but a second change had

come upon all things. The star-shaped flowers shrank into the stems of the trees,

and appeared no more. The tints of the green carpet faded; and, one by one, the

ruby-red asphodels withered away; and there sprang up, in place of them, ten by

ten, dark, eye-like violets, that writhed uneasily and were ever encumbered with

dew. And Life departed from our paths; for the tall flamingo flaunted no longer

his scarlet plumage before us, but flew sadly from the vale into the hills, with all

the gay glowing birds that had arrived in his company. And the golden and silver

fish swam down through the gorge at the lower end of our domain and bedecked

the sweet river never again. And the lulling melody that had been softer than the

wind-harp of Aeolus, and more divine than all save the voice of Eleonora, it died

little by little away, in murmurs growing lower and lower, until the stream returned, at length, utterly, into the solemnity of its original silence. And then, lastly, the voluminous cloud uprose, and, abandoning the tops of the mountains

to the dimness of old, fell back into the regions of Hesper, and took away all its

manifold golden and gorgeous glories from the Valley of the Many-Colored

Grass.

Yet the promises of Eleonora were not forgotten; for I heard the sounds of the

swinging of the censers of the angels; and streams of a holy perfume floated ever

and ever about the valley; and at lone hours, when my heart beat heavily, the winds that bathed my brow came unto me laden with soft sighs; and indistinct murmurs filled often the night air, and once—oh, but once only! I was awakened

from a slumber, like the slumber of death, by the pressing of spiritual lips upon my own.

But the void within my heart refused, even thus, to be filled. I longed for the

love which had before filled it to overflowing. At length the valley pained me through its memories of Eleonora, and I left it for ever for the vanities and the

turbulent triumphs of the world.

I found myself within a strange city, where all things might have served to blot

from recollection the sweet dreams I had dreamed so long in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. The pomps and pageantries of a stately court, and the mad

clangor of arms, and the radiant loveliness of women, bewildered and

intoxicated my brain. But as yet my soul had proved true to its vows, and the indications of the presence of Eleonora were still given me in the silent hours of

the night. Suddenly these manifestations they ceased, and the world grew dark before mine eyes, and I stood aghast at the burning thoughts which possessed, at

the terrible temptations which beset me; for there came from some far, far distant

and unknown land, into the gay court of the king I served, a maiden to whose beauty my whole recreant heart yielded at once—at whose footstool I bowed

down without a struggle, in the most ardent, in the most abject worship of love.

What, indeed, was my passion for the young girl of the valley in comparison with the fervor, and the delirium, and the spirit-lifting ecstasy of adoration with

which I poured out my whole soul in tears at the feet of the ethereal

Ermengarde?—Oh, bright was the seraph Ermengarde! and in that knowledge I

had room for none other.—Oh, divine was the angel Ermengarde! and as I

looked down into the depths of her memorial eyes, I thought only of them—and

of her.

I wedded;—nor dreaded the curse I had invoked; and its bitterness was not visited upon me. And once—but once again in the silence of the night; there came through my lattice the soft sighs which had forsaken me; and they

modelled themselves into familiar and sweet voice, saying:

“Sleep in peace!—for the Spirit of Love reigneth and ruleth, and, in taking to

thy passionate heart her who is Ermengarde, thou art absolved, for reasons which

shall be made known to thee in Heaven, of thy vows unto Eleonora.”

NOTES TO THIS VOLUME

Notes — Scheherazade

(*1) The coralites.

(*2) “One of the most remarkable natural curiosities in Texas is a petrified forest, near the head of Pasigno river. It consists of several hundred trees, in an

erect position, all turned to stone. Some trees, now growing, are partly petrified.

This is a startling fact for natural philosophers, and must cause them to modify

the existing theory of petrification.— *Kennedy*.

This account, at first discredited, has since been corroborated by the discovery

of a completely petrified forest, near the head waters of the Cheyenne, or Chienne river, which has its source in the Black Hills of the rocky chain.

There is scarcely, perhaps, a spectacle on the surface of the globe more

remarkable, either in a geological or picturesque point of view than that

presented by the petrified forest, near Cairo. The traveller, having passed the tombs of the caliphs, just beyond the gates of the city, proceeds to the southward,

nearly at right angles to the road across the desert to Suez, and after having travelled some ten miles up a low barren valley, covered with sand, gravel, and

sea shells, fresh as if the tide had retired but yesterday, crosses a low range of sandhills, which has for some distance run parallel to his path. The scene now presented to him is beyond conception singular and desolate. A mass of

fragments of trees, all converted into stone, and when struck by his horse’s hoof

ringing like cast iron, is seen to extend itself for miles and miles around him, in

the form of a decayed and prostrate forest. The wood is of a dark brown hue, but

retains its form in perfection, the pieces being from one to fifteen feet in length,

and from half a foot to three feet in thickness, strewed so closely together, as far

as the eye can reach, that an Egyptian donkey can scarcely thread its way through amongst them, and so natural that, were it in Scotland or Ireland, it might pass without remark for some enormous drained bog, on which the

exhumed trees lay rotting in the sun. The roots and rudiments of the branches are, in many cases, nearly perfect, and in some the worm-holes eaten under the

bark are readily recognizable. The most delicate of the sap vessels, and all the finer portions of the centre of the wood, are perfectly entire, and bear to be examined with the strongest magnifiers. The whole are so thoroughly silicified as to scratch glass and are capable of receiving the highest polish.— *Asiatic Magazine*.

(*3) The Mammoth Cave of Kentucky.

(*4) In Iceland, 1783.

(*5) “During the eruption of Hecla, in 1766, clouds of this kind produced such

a degree of darkness that, at Glaumba, which is more than fifty leagues from the

mountain, people could only find their way by groping. During the eruption of Vesuvius, in 1794, at Caserta, four leagues distant, people could only walk by the light of torches. On the first of May, 1812, a cloud of volcanic ashes and sand, coming from a volcano in the island of St. Vincent, covered the whole of

Barbadoes, spreading over it so intense a darkness that, at mid-day, in the open

air, one could not perceive the trees or other objects near him, or even a white handkerchief placed at the distance of six inches from the eye. *“—Murray, p.*

215, Phil. edit.

(*6) In the year 1790, in the Caraccas during an earthquake a portion of the granite soil sank and left a lake eight hundred yards in diameter, and from eighty

to a hundred feet deep. It was a part of the forest of Aripao which sank, and the

trees remained green for several months under the water."— *Murray*, p. 221

(*7) The hardest steel ever manufactured may, under the action of a blowpipe,

be reduced to an impalpable powder, which will float readily in the atmospheric

air.

(*8) The region of the Niger. See Simmona's *Colonial Magazine*.

(*9) The Myrmeleon-lion-ant. The term "monster" is equally applicable to

small abnormal things and to great, while such epithets as "vast" are merely comparative. The cavern of the myrmeleon is vast in comparison with the hole

of the common red ant. A grain of silex is also a "rock."

(*10) The *Epidendron, Flos Aeris,* of the family of the *Orchideae*, grows with merely the surface of its roots attached to a tree or other object, from which it derives no nutriment—subsisting altogether upon air.

(*11) The *Parasites,* such as the wonderful *Rafflesia Arnaldii*.

(*12) *Schouw* advocates a class of plants that grow upon living animals—the

Plantae Epizoae. Of this class are the *Fuci* and *Algae*.

Mr. J. B. Williams, of Salem, Mass. , presented the "National Institute" with an insect from New Zealand, with the following description: "' *The Hotte*, a decided caterpillar, or worm, is found gnawing at the root of the *Rota* tree, with a plant growing out of its head. This most peculiar and extraordinary insect travels up both the *Rota* and *Ferriri* trees, and entering into the top, eats its way, perforating the trunk of the trees until it reaches the root, and dies, or remains

dormant, and the plant propagates out of its head; the body remains perfect and entire, of a harder substance than when alive. From this insect the natives make a

coloring for tattooing.

(*13) In mines and natural caves we find a species of cryptogamous *fungus* that emits an intense phosphorescence.

(*14) The orchis, scabius and valisneria.

(*15) The corolla of this flower (*Aristolochia Clematitis*), which is tubular, but terminating upwards in a ligulate limb, is inflated into a globular figure at the base. The tubular part is internally beset with stiff hairs, pointing downwards.

The globular part contains the pistil, which consists merely of a germen and stigma, together with the surrounding stamens. But the stamens, being shorter than the germen, cannot discharge the pollen so as to throw it upon the stigma, as

the flower stands always upright till after impregnation. And hence, without some additional and peculiar aid, the pollen must necessarily fan down to the bottom of the flower. Now, the aid that nature has furnished in this case, is that

of the *Tiputa Pennicornis*, a small insect, which entering the tube of the corrolla in quest of honey, descends to the bottom, and rummages about till it becomes quite covered with pollen; but not being able to force its way out again, owing to

the downward position of the hairs, which converge to a point like the wires of a

mouse-trap, and being somewhat impatient of its confinement it brushes

backwards and forwards, trying every corner, till, after repeatedly traversing the

stigma, it covers it with pollen sufficient for its impregnation, in consequence of

which the flower soon begins to droop, and the hairs to shrink to the sides of the

tube, effecting an easy passage for the escape of the insect."— *Rev. P. Keith-System of Physiological Botany*.

(*16) The bees—ever since bees were—have been constructing their cells

with just such sides, in just such number, and at just such inclinations, as it has

been demonstrated (in a problem involving the profoundest mathematical

principles) are the very sides, in the very number, and at the very angles, which

will afford the creatures the most room that is compatible with the greatest stability of structure.

During the latter part of the last century, the question arose among

mathematicians—"to determine the best form that can be given to the sails of a

windmill, according to their varying distances from the revolving vanes, and likewise from the centres of the revoloution." This is an excessively complex problem, for it is, in other words, to find the best possible position at an infinity of varied distances and at an infinity of points on the arm. There were a thousand

futile attempts to answer the query on the part of the most illustrious

mathematicians, and when at length, an undeniable solution was discovered, men found that the wings of a bird had given it with absolute precision ever since the first bird had traversed the air.

(*17) He observed a flock of pigeons passing betwixt Frankfort and the Indian

territory, one mile at least in breadth; it took up four hours in passing, which, at

the rate of one mile per minute, gives a length of 240 miles; and, supposing three

pigeons to each square yard, gives 2,230,272,000 Pigeons.—"*Travels in Canada*

and the United States," by Lieut. F. Hall.

(*18) The earth is upheld by a cow of a blue color, having horns four hundred

in number."— *Sale's Koran.*

(*19) "The *Entozoa*, or intestinal worms, have repeatedly been observed in the muscles, and in the cerebral substance of men."—See Wyatt's Physiology, p.

143.

(*20) On the Great Western Railway, between London and Exeter, a speed of

71 miles per hour has been attained. A train weighing 90 tons was whirled from

Paddington to Didcot (53 miles) in 51 minutes.

(*21) The *Eccalobeion*

(*22) Maelzel's Automaton Chess-player.

(*23) Babbage's Calculating Machine.

(*24) *Chabert*, and since him, a hundred others.

(*25) The Electrotype.

(*26) *Wollaston* made of platinum for the field of views in a telescope a wire one eighteen-thousandth part of an inch in thickness. It could be seen only by means of the microscope.

(*27) Newton demonstrated that the retina beneath the influence of the violet

ray of the spectrum, vibrated 900,000,000 of times in a second.

(*28) Voltaic pile.

(*29) The Electro Telegraph Printing Apparatus.

(*30) The Electro telegraph transmits intelligence instantaneously- at least at

so far as regards any distance upon the earth.

(*31) Common experiments in Natural Philosophy. If two red rays from two

luminous points be admitted into a dark chamber so as to fall on a white surface,

and differ in their length by 0.0000258 of an inch, their intensity is doubled. So

also if the difference in length be any whole-number multiple of that fraction. A

multiple by 2 1/4, 3 1/4, &c., gives an intensity equal to one ray only; but a

multiple by 2 1/2, 3 1/2, &c., gives the result of total darkness. In violet rays similar effects arise when the difference in length is 0.000157 of an inch; and with all other rays the results are the same—the difference varying with a uniform increase from the violet to the red.

“Analogous experiments in respect to sound produce analogous results.”

(*32) Place a platina crucible over a spirit lamp, and keep it a red heat; pour in

some sulphuric acid, which, though the most volatile of bodies at a common temperature, will be found to become completely fixed in a hot crucible, and not

a drop evaporates—being surrounded by an atmosphere of its own, it does not,

in fact, touch the sides. A few drops of water are now introduced, when the acid,

immediately coming in contact with the heated sides of the crucible, flies off in

sulphurous acid vapor, and so rapid is its progress, that the caloric of the water

passes off with it, which falls a lump of ice to the bottom; by taking advantage of

the moment before it is allowed to remelt, it may be turned out a lump of ice from a red-hot vessel.

(*33) The Daguerreotype.

(*34) Although light travels 167,000 miles in a second, the distance of 61

Cygni (the only star whose distance is ascertained) is so inconceivably great, that

its rays would require more than ten years to reach the earth. For stars beyond this, 20—or even 1000 years—would be a moderate estimate. Thus, if they had

been annihilated 20, or 1000 years ago, we might still see them to-day by the light which started from their surfaces 20 or 1000 years in the past time. That many which we see daily are really extinct, is not impossible—not even

improbable.

Notes—Maelstrom

(*1) See Archimedes, "*De Incidentibus in Fluido*."—lib. 2.

Notes—Island of the Fay

(*1) Moraux is here derived from moeurs, and its meaning is "fashionable" or

more strictly "of manners."

(*2) Speaking of the tides, Pomponius Mela, in his treatise "De Situ Orbis,"

says "either the world is a great animal, or" etc

(*3) Balzac—in substance—I do not remember the words

(*4) Florem putares nare per liquidum aethera.—P. Commire.

Notes — Domain of Arnheim

(*1) An incident, similar in outline to the one here imagined, occurred, not very long ago, in England. The name of the fortunate heir was Thelluson. I first

saw an account of this matter in the “Tour” of Prince Puckler Muskau, who makes the sum inherited *ninety millions of pounds*, and justly observes that “in the contemplation of so vast a sum, and of the services to which it might be applied, there is something even of the sublime.” To suit the views of this article

I have followed the Prince’s statement, although a grossly exaggerated one. The

germ, and in fact, the commencement of the present paper was published many

years ago—previous to the issue of the first number of Sue’s admirable *Juif Errant*, which may possibly have been suggested to him by Muskau’s account.

Notes—Berenice

(*1) For as Jove, during the winter season, gives twice seven days of warmth,

men have called this element and temperate time the nurse of the beautiful Halcyon— *Simonides*

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- The Raven Edition
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- THE THOUSAND-AND-SECOND TALE OF SCHEHERAZADE
- A DESCENT INTO THE MAELSTRÖM.
- VON KEMPELEN AND HIS DISCOVERY
- MESMERIC REVELATION
- THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF M. VALDEMAR
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- THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER
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